

New Europe College Black Sea Link Program Yearbook 2010-2011, 2011-2012



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New Europe College
Black Sea Link Program
Yearbook 2010-2011, 2011-2012

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NEW EUROPE FOUNDATION NEW EUROPE COLLEGE

Institute for Advanced Study

New Europe College (NEC) is an independent Romanian institute for advanced study in the humanities and social sciences founded in 1994 by Professor Andrei Pleșu (philosopher, art historian, writer, Romanian Minister of Culture, 1990–1991, Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1997-1999) within the framework of the *New Europe Foundation*, established in 1994 as a private foundation subject to Romanian law.

Its impetus was the *New Europe Prize for Higher Education and Research*, awarded in 1993 to Professor Pleșu by a group of six institutes for advanced study (the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Stanford, the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, the National Humanities Center, Research Triangle Park, the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in Humanities and Social Sciences, Wassenaar, the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study in the Social Sciences, Uppsala, and the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin).

Since 1994, the NEC community of fellows and *alumni* has enlarged to over 500 members. In 1998 New Europe College was awarded the prestigious *Hannah Arendt Prize* for its achievements in setting new standards in research and higher education. New Europe College is officially recognized by the Romanian Ministry of Education and Research as an institutional structure for postgraduate studies in the humanities and social sciences, at the level of advanced studies.

Focused primarily on individual research at an advanced level, NEC offers to young Romanian scholars and academics in the fields of humanities and social sciences, and to the foreign scholars invited as fellows appropriate working conditions, and provides an institutional framework with strong

international links, acting as a stimulating environment for interdisciplinary dialogue and critical debates. The academic programs NEC coordinates, and the events it organizes aim at strengthening research in the humanities and social sciences and at promoting contacts between Romanian scholars and their peers worldwide.

Academic programs currently organized and coordinated by NEC:

- ***NEC Fellowships (since 1994)***

Each year, up to ten NEC Fellowships open both to Romanian and international outstanding young scholars in the humanities and social sciences are publicly announced. The Fellows are chosen by the NEC international Academic Advisory Board for the duration of one academic year, or one term. They gather for weekly seminars to discuss the progress of their research, and participate in all the scientific events organized by NEC. The Fellows receive a monthly stipend, and are given the opportunity of a research trip abroad, at a university or research institute of their choice. At the end of their stay, the Fellows submit papers representing the results of their research, to be published in the New Europe College Yearbooks.

- ***Ștefan Odobleja Fellowships (since October 2008)***

The fellowships given in this program are supported by the National Council of Scientific Research, and are meant to complement and enlarge the core fellowship program. The definition of these fellowships, targeting young Romanian researchers, is identical with those in the NEC Program, in which the Odobleja Fellowships are integrated.

- ***The GE-NEC III Fellowships Program (since October 2009)***

This program, supported by the Getty Foundation, started in 2009. It proposes a research on, and a reassessment of Romanian art during the interval 1945 – 2000, that is, since the onset of the Communist regime in Romania up to recent times, through contributions coming from young scholars attached to the New Europe College as Fellows.

As in the previous programs supported by the Getty Foundation at the NEC, this program also includes a number of invited guest lecturers, whose presence is meant to ensure a comparative dimension, and to strengthen the methodological underpinnings of the research conducted by the Fellows.

- ***The Black Sea Link (since October 2010)***

This Fellowship Program, sponsored by the VolkswagenStiftung, invites young researchers from Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as from other countries within the Black Sea region, for a stay of one or two terms at the New Europe College, during which they have the opportunity to work on projects of their choice. The program welcomes a wide variety of disciplines in the fields of humanities and social sciences. Besides hosting a number of Fellows, the College organizes within this program workshops and symposia on topics relevant to the history, present, and prospects of the Black Sea region.

Other fellowship programs organized since the founding of New Europe College:

- ***RELINK Fellowships (1996–2002)***

The RELINK Program targeted highly qualified young Romanian scholars returning from studies or research stays abroad. Ten RELINK Fellows were selected each year through an open competition; in order to facilitate their reintegration in the local scholarly milieu and to improve their working conditions, a support lasting three years was offered, consisting of: funds for acquiring scholarly literature, an annual allowance enabling the recipients to make a one-month research trip to a foreign institute of their choice in order to sustain existing scholarly contacts and forge new ones, and the use of a laptop computer and printer. Besides their individual research projects, the RELINK fellows of the last series were also required to organize outreach activities involving their universities, for which they received a monthly stipend. NEC published several volumes comprising individual or group research works of the RELINK Fellows.

- ***The NEC–LINK Program (2003 - 2009)***

Drawing on the experience of its NEC and RELINK Programs in connecting with the Romanian academic milieu, NEC initiated in 2003, with support from HESP, a program that aimed to contribute more consistently to the advancement of higher education in major Romanian academic centers (Bucharest, Cluj–Napoca, Iași, Timișoara). Teams consisting of two academics from different universities in Romania, assisted by a PhD student, offered joint courses for the duration of one semester in a discipline within the fields of humanities and social sciences. The program supported innovative courses, conceived so as to meet the needs of the host universities. The grantees participating in the Program received monthly stipends, a substantial support for ordering literature relevant to their courses, as well as funding for inviting guest lecturers from abroad and for organizing local scientific events.

- ***The GE–NEC I and II Programs (2000 – 2004, and 2004 – 2007)***

New Europe College organized and coordinated two cycles in a program financially supported by the Getty Foundation. Its aim was to strengthen research and education in fields related to visual culture, by inviting leading specialists from all over the world to give lectures and hold seminars for the benefit of Romanian undergraduate and graduate students, young academics and researchers. This program also included 10–month fellowships for Romanian scholars, chosen through the same selection procedures as the NEC Fellows (see above). The GE–NEC Fellows were fully integrated in the life of the College, received a monthly stipend, and were given the opportunity of spending one month abroad on a research trip. At the end of the academic year the Fellows submitted papers representing the results of their research, to be published in the GE–NEC Yearbooks series.

- ***NEC Regional Fellowships (2001 - 2006)***

In 2001 New Europe College introduced a regional dimension to its programs (hitherto dedicated solely to Romanian scholars), by offering fellowships to academics and researchers from South–Eastern Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro,

Serbia, Slovenia, and Turkey). This program aimed at integrating into the international academic network scholars from a region whose scientific resources are as yet insufficiently known, and to stimulate and strengthen the intellectual dialogue at a regional level. Regional Fellows received a monthly stipend and were given the opportunity of a one-month research trip abroad. At the end of the grant period, the Fellows were expected to submit papers representing the results of their research, published in the NEC Regional Program Yearbooks series.

- ***The Britannia-NEC Fellowship (2004 - 2007)***

This fellowship (1 opening per academic year) was offered by a private anonymous donor from the U.K. It was in all respects identical to a NEC Fellowship. The contributions of Fellows in this program were included in the NEC Yearbooks.

- ***The Petre Țuțea Fellowships (2006 - 2008, 2009 - 2010)***

In 2006 NEC was offered the opportunity of opening a fellowships program financed the Romanian Government through its Department for Relations with the Romanians Living Abroad. Fellowships are granted to researchers of Romanian descent based abroad, as well as to Romanian researchers, to work on projects that address the cultural heritage of the Romanian *diaspora*. Fellows in this program are fully integrated in the College's community. At the end of the year they submit papers representing the results of their research, to be published in the bilingual series of the *Petre Țuțea* Program publications.

- ***Europa Fellowships (2006 - 2010)***

This fellowship program, financed by the VolkswagenStiftung, proposes to respond, at a different level, to some of the concerns that had inspired our *Regional Program*. Under the general title *Traditions of the New Europe. A Prehistory of European Integration in South-Eastern Europe*, Fellows work on case studies that attempt to recapture the earlier history of the European integration, as it has been taking shape over the centuries in South-Eastern Europe, thus offering the communitarian Europe some valuable vestiges of its less known past.

- **Robert Bosch Fellowships (2007 - 2009)**

This fellowship program, funded by the Robert Bosch Foundation, supported young scholars and academics from Western Balkan countries, offering them the opportunity to spend a term at the New Europe College and devote to their research work. Fellows in this program received a monthly stipend, and funds for a one-month study trip to a university/research center in Germany.

New Europe College has been hosting over the years an ongoing series of lectures given by prominent foreign and Romanian scholars, for the benefit of academics, researchers and students, as well as a wider public. The College also organizes international and national events (seminars, workshops, colloquia, symposia, book launches, etc.).

An important component of NEC is its library, consisting of reference works, books and periodicals in the humanities, social and economic sciences. The library holds, in addition, several thousands of books and documents resulting from private donations. It is first and foremost destined to service the fellows, but it is also open to students, academics and researchers from Bucharest and from outside it.

Beside the above-described programs, New Europe Foundation and the College expanded their activities over the last years by administering, or by being involved in the following major projects:

In the past:

- ***The Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Religious Studies towards the EU Integration (2001–2005)***

Funding from the Austrian Ludwig Boltzmann Gesellschaft enabled us to select during this interval a number of associate researchers, whose work focused on the sensitive issue of religion related problems in the Balkans, approached from the viewpoint of the EU integration. Through its activities the institute fostered the dialogue between distinct

religious cultures (Christianity, Islam, Judaism), and between different confessions within the same religion, attempting to investigate the sources of antagonisms and to work towards a common ground of tolerance and cooperation. The institute hosted international scholarly events, issued a number of publications, and enlarged its library with publications meant to facilitate informed and up-to-date approaches in this field.

- ***The Septuagint Translation Project (2002 - 2011)***

This project aims at achieving a scientifically reliable translation of the Septuagint into Romanian by a group of very gifted, mostly young, Romanian scholars, attached to the NEC. The financial support is granted by the Romanian foundation *Anonimul*. Seven of the planned nine volumes have already been published by the Polirom Publishing House in Iași.

- ***The Excellency Network Germany – South–Eastern Europe Program (2005 - 2008)***

The aim of this program, financed by the Hertie Foundation, has been to establish and foster contacts between scholars and academics, as well as higher education entities from Germany and South–Eastern Europe, in view of developing a regional scholarly network; it focused preeminently on questions touching upon European integration, such as transnational governance and citizenship. The main activities of the program consisted of hosting at the New Europe College scholars coming from Germany, invited to give lectures at the College and at universities throughout Romania, and organizing international scientific events with German participation.

- ***The ethnoArc Project–Linked European Archives for Ethnomusicological Research***

An European Research Project in the 6th Framework Programme: Information Society Technologies–Access to and Preservation of Cultural and Scientific Resources (2006-2008)

The goal of the *ethnoArc* project (which started in 2005 under the title *From Wax Cylinder to Digital Storage* with funding from the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation and the Federal Ministry for Education

and Research in Germany) was to contribute to the preservation, accessibility, connectedness and exploitation of some of the most prestigious ethno-musicological archives in Europe (Bucharest, Budapest, Berlin, and Geneva), by providing a linked archive for field collections from different sources, thus enabling access to cultural content for various application and research purposes. The project was run by an international network, which included: the “Constantin Brăiloiu” Institute for Ethnography and Folklore, Bucharest; Archives Internationales de Musique Populaire, Geneva; the Ethno-musicological Department of the Ethnologic Museum Berlin (Phonogramm Archiv), Berlin; the Institute of Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest; Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin (Coordinator), Berlin; New Europe College, Bucharest; FOKUS Fraunhofer Institute for Open Communication Systems, Berlin.

- ***DOCSOC, Excellency, Innovation and Interdisciplinarity in doctoral and postdoctoral studies in sociology*** (A project in the Development of Human Resources, under the aegis of the National Council of Scientific Research) – in cooperation with the University of Bucharest (starting July 2010)
- ***UEFISCCDI–CNCS (PD–Projects): Federalism or Intergovernmentalism? Normative Perspectives on the Democratic Model of the European Union (Dr. Dan LAZEA); The Political Radicalization of the Kantian Idea of Philosophy in a Cosmopolitan Sense (Dr. Áron TELEGDI-CSETRI)***, Timeframe: August 1, 2010 – July 31, 2012 (2 Years)

Ongoing projects:

The Medicine of the Mind and Natural Philosophy in Early Modern England: A new Interpretation of Francis Bacon (A project under the aegis of the European Research Council (ERC) Starting Grants Scheme) – In cooperation with the Warburg Institute, School of Advanced Study, London (since December 2009)

Business Elites in Romania: Their Social and Educational Determinants and their Impact on Economic Performances. This is the Romanian contribution to a joint project with the University of Sankt Gallen, entitled ***Markets for Executives and Non-Executives in Western and eastern Europe***, and financed by the National Swiss Fund for the Development of Scientific Research (SCOPES) (since December 2009)

Civilization. Identity. Globalism. Social and Human Studies in the Context of European Development (A project in the Development of Human Resources, under the aegis of the National Council of Scientific Research) – in cooperation with the Romanian Academy (starting October 2010)

The EURIAS Fellowship Programme, a project initiated by NetIAS (Network of European Institutes for Advanced Study), coordinated by the RFIEA (Network of French Institutes for Advanced Study), and co-sponsored by the European Commission's 7th Framework Programme - COFUND action. It is an international researcher mobility programme in collaboration with 14 participating Institutes of Advanced Study in Berlin, Bologna, Brussels, Bucharest, Budapest, Cambridge, Helsinki, Jerusalem, Lyons, Nantes, Paris, Uppsala, Vienna, Wassenaar. The College will host the second *EURIAS* Fellow in October 2012.

UEFISCDI – CNCS (TE – Project): Critical Foundations of Contemporary Cosmopolitanism (Dr. Tamara CĂRĂUȘ), Timeframe: October 5, 2011 – October 5, 2014 (3 years)

UEFISCDI – CNCS (IDEI-Project): Models of Producing and Disseminating Knowledge in Early Modern Europe: The Cartesian Framework (Dr. Vlad ALEXANDRESCU),
Timeframe: January 1, 2012 – December 31, 2014 (3 years)

Other projects are in the making, often as a result of initiatives coming from fellows and *alumni* of the NEC.

Present Financial Support

The State Secretariat for Education and Research of Switzerland (Center for Governance and Culture in Europe, University of St. Gallen)

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The Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation – the Executive Agency for Higher Education and Research Funding, Romania

Landis & Gyr Stiftung, Zug, Switzerland

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Fritz Thyssen Stiftung, Köln, Germany

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Central European University Visiting Fellowship (2009)

Gerda Henkel Stiftung's *Special Program to Support the Next Generations of
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Her articles have been published in *World Politics*, *Holocaust and Genocide
Studies*, *Yad Vashem Studies*, *Osteuropa*, and *Cahiers du monde russe* among
others

Book:

Great Britain and the Union of the Romanian Principalities (1856-1859),
Chişinău, Pontes Publishing House, 2010

Edited Volume

Al doilea război mondial: memorie şi istorie în estul şi Vestul Europei
[*The Second World War: Memory and History in the East and West of Europe*],
eds. Diana Dumitru, Igor Caşi, Andrei Cuşco, Petru Negură
(Chişinău: Cartier, 2013)

THE SOVIET STATE AND ITS JEWRY: THE ORIGINS OF POPULAR AND OFFICIAL ANTISEMITISM DURING AND AFTER WWII

The Soviet State's relationship with its Jewry makes for an intricate story. It opened with the energetic fight against any antisemitic words and deeds on the territory under Bolshevik control. It further included continuous state efforts to emancipate and integrate a population that had hitherto been discriminated against by the Tsarist regime. An energetic fight against antisemitism was organized on various fronts: religious, political, economic, and social. Special agencies were set up within the Soviet state and party in order to deal with the complex Jewish question and to bring the Bolshevik message to the Jewish masses. Yet, in another well-known chapter, sometimes referred to by scholars as "Stalin's pogrom" (1948-1952), the state attacked Jewish groups and individuals with a degree of ferocity.¹ How this volte-face became possible constitutes the main question of the present study.

The researcher Gennady Kostyrchenko places the birth of state antisemitism in the 1930s, and he sees the "cradle" of this antisemitism in the Party's Department of Party Agency Heads (*Otdel rukovodeashih partiinykh organov*), led by Gheorghy Malenkov.² Other scholars resume Soviet state-sponsored antisemitism to postwar period, simultaneously underlining Stalin's personal initiative in anti-Jewish attacks and linking it to the broader setting of postwar Soviet policies of fighting against "foreign influences."³ Some Russian researchers consider that there are sufficient reasons to view the public and intense antisemitic media campaign, launched in Moscow in the period of January-March 1949, as an obvious case of open manifestation of state antisemitism under the Stalin's careful orchestration.⁴ The so-called Doctors' Plot was the last conspiracy used by the ailing dictator in order to persecute a group of prominent Kremlin Jewish doctors accused of plotting to murder Soviet leaders.⁵

This paper argues that a cautious anti-Jewish sentiment developed contours among the Soviet state's bureaucracy during the German-Soviet

war and gradually solidified after the end of the war. Popular antisemitism among the various lower strata was the first to appear on the Soviet territory during this period, and it was primarily nourished by Nazi propaganda and the difficulties caused by the prolonged war. The same cannot be said about Soviet state officials. The latter's anti-Jewish sentiment was primarily a reaction to the "hardening" of Jewish identity among Soviet Jewry and the mobilization of Jewish elites for promoting the rights and interests of their co-ethnics.

Popular Antisemitism on Soviet Territories during the Second World War

Recent studies point to variations in the degree of antisemitism on Soviet occupied territories during the Second World War. In particular, the gentile collusion in anti-Jewish violence in the aftermath of the 1941 Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union across a swath of territory stretching from roughly the Baltic to the Black Seas is well documented.⁶ Jan Gross detailed fierce, voluntary antisemitic actions undertaken by Polish gentiles, who organized a pogrom that destroyed Jewish life in the village of Jedwabne.⁷ Gross identifies a strong tradition of antisemitism in Polish society as the main driver of this violence. The implication of his study is that, given the history of antisemitism in Eastern Europe, gentiles elsewhere should also violently attack Jewish life if given the opportunity. Indeed, vicious attacks against Jews took place in eastern Poland, Lithuania, western Ukraine, Bessarabia, and other regions that became part of the Soviet Union after the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939.⁸ In the infamous pogrom occurred in the Ukrainian city of Lviv between 7,000 and 10,000 Jews were murdered by locals upon the arrival of the German army.⁹ According to a source of information, a Ukrainian youth confessed to single-handedly having slain seventy-five Jews in Lviv in one night.¹⁰ Nevertheless, several studies pointed to puzzling variations in the degree of antisemitic violence in Eastern Europe during the Second World War. The territories that had experienced decades of Soviet power are notably absent from these accounts of civilians' violence against their Jewish neighbors.

Yitzhak Arad was among the first scholars who identified regional variations of the attitude of non-Jewish populations towards the Jews on the territories within the Soviet Union under Nazi rule.¹¹ His analysis, based on German Einsatzgruppen reports, suggests that regions that had been

exposed to Soviet rule demonstrated lower-levels of support for anti-Jewish activities when compared with neighboring territories of Eastern Europe that had not experienced such rule. Barbara Epstein's work on the Minsk ghetto (Belarus), partially builds on Arad's observation by stressing the substantial, organized solidarity of gentiles with Jewish victims.¹² Epstein explains this wartime solidarity through a number of factors, including "Soviet internationalism" constructed among the population prior to the war. However, Epstein assumes that the Soviet regime did not have the same impact in Ukraine, since "there was neither joint organized resistance ... nor any record of individual assistance there at the level that took place in Minsk." She reiterates her opinion that "for several centuries Ukraine had been the main center of anti-Semitic violence in Eastern Europe, and two decades of Soviet rule did not eradicate the effects of this history."¹³

New scholarship on the Holocaust in Ukraine noticed the fact that the population in central and southern Ukraine [part of the USSR during the interwar period], with few exceptions, refrained from anti-Jewish violence even when the Einsatzkommandos tried to incite exactly that type of violence, while in the Ukrainian regions of western Volhynia and eastern Galicia [part of Poland in the interwar years], by contrast, dozens of pogroms occurred in the summer of 1941 following the German invasion.¹⁴ Similar to Epstein, Ray Brandon and Wendy Lower share the conviction that antisemitism had not been eradicated by Soviet rule, but that the readiness to resort to anti-Jewish violence had clearly receded among this population.¹⁵

Comparably, Amir Weiner, who studied the Ukrainian region of Vinnitsa during the occupation, confirms that there was no mass-led antisemitic violence when the Nazis arrived, but points simultaneously to the survival of antisemitism among the local population. Although he admits that the evolution of ethnic Soviet policies in the decade before the German invasion left "an intriguing legacy," in his interpretation, more than anything else, it was the unprecedented scale and endurance of the genocide that shaped people's responses to the Jewish destruction by Nazis in former Soviet Ukraine.¹⁶

Yet, perplexingly, several sources indicate an increase in anti-Jewish sentiments among Soviet citizens already at the end of the war.¹⁷ Thus, Mordechai Altshuler highlights that Ukrainian security services reported a number of antisemitic manifestations at the end of war, one of prominent proportions taking place in Kiev. On a similar line of thought, Karel Berkhoff affirms:

once the Red Army returned, however, and with it many Jews, the level of anti-Semitism, seems to have surpassed the prewar level and even the level of anti-Semitism that existed under German rule.¹⁸

Gennady Kostyrchenko found evidence to the fact that in Western Siberia, Kazakhstan, and Central Asia, thousands of kilometers away from the frontline anti-Jewish feelings arose among people from the “lethargic” condition they had taken under the dictatorship of Stalin, being resuscitated by the conditions of disorder, hardship, and the devastation of war.¹⁹ In those remote places locals had to meet and interact with waves of European evacuees, including numerous Soviet Jews who evacuated with their factories or institutions, or Jewish refugees from Poland, who stood out from the rest of population by their special outfit, as well as numerous injured Soviet soldiers or invalids, who already has been exposed to Nazi propaganda. As Kostyrchenko noticed, in these conditions an everyday antisemitism erupted, provoked by the “exoticism” and “otherness” of Polish Jews, a perceived prosperity of the Soviet Jewish evacuees, and the influx of racist ideas propagated by Nazis.²⁰

Indeed, in 1942 two reports submitted to the upper echelon of power—to the head of the NKVD, Lavrenty Beria, and Soviet deputy prime-minister, Andrey Vyshinsky—stressed the rapid increase of antisemitism in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan after the arrival of numerous internal refugees, which included Jews. Frequently, the spirits were inflamed by the resulting shortages and growth of prices of foodstuff, as well as the inconveniences appeared from the placement of the evacuated employees in locals’ houses. For example, in Uzbekistan three cases of beating of Jews were reported, accompanied by anti-Jewish slurs. One of these cases attracted a crowd of about two hundreds onlookers.²¹ Some of the antisemites mentioned in the report were accused of looking forward to the arrival of Hitler and anticipating the slaughter of all Jews; a factory worker even publicly announced her intention to personally hang all Jews that were placed into her apartment.²²

In the same year of 1942 the general prosecutor of the USSR sent a worried note to the Soviet deputy prime-minister Andrey Vyshinsky concerning the increasing manifestations of antisemitism in Kazakhstan. According to this report, if during the first half of the year twenty people were sent to court for related offenses, then between August 1 and September 4, for similar reasons thirty-five defendants just in the region of Alma-Ata were sent to court. The latter were arrested for various misdeeds: public offense towards Jews, beatings Jews in the streets, open

approval of Hitler's anti-Jewish policy, refusal to offer work or foodstuff to Jews, spreading slurs about Jews killing gentiles' children.²³ The prosecutor of Kazakhstan came to the conclusion that, in general, the arrested antisemites proved to be "déclassé elements," people who were previously kulaks, or with a history of illegal behavior; three candidates to the Communist Party and two members of Komsomol were also among the arrested.²⁴ As visible from these cases, along the old antisemitic rhetoric and economical tensions, a new ideological (Nazi) basis for anti-Jewish sentiments was craving space among Soviet society.

Despite existent indications of a number of separate incidents of antisemitic character, the lack of a comprehensive study is making it quite difficult to fully assess the breadth and persistence of this surge of antisemitism on Soviet territory. At present, Mordechai Altshuler's article appears to be the only systematic study of popular (mass-based) antisemitism on the Soviet territory.²⁵ Hence, we can only summarize the points made by other scholars in reference to Jewish-gentile relations over the course of German-Soviet war.

First and foremost, some factors indicate that the anti-Jewish policies implemented by the Nazis and their allies had at least some negative effect on the population within Soviet territories. After Soviet officials returned to areas the USSR had occupied before the war, they promptly noted that the population exhibited a noticeable "rise in nationalist consolidation and exclusivity and a rejuvenation of chauvinist attitude."²⁶ A number of authors appear to agree that the experience of the occupation led to the escalation of ethnic conflict after the war. Timothy Snyder argues that this was the case in Soviet Ukraine, where racist ideology and practice set "precedents for (and offered training in) attacks on civilians for reasons on national identity."²⁷ Kate Brown suggests that Soviet society "began to polarize in a new way around racial designations," as a result of repetitions of the message of hatred coupled with the visible starvation, humiliation, and destruction of Jews and members of other groups.²⁸ In her interpretation, "as people were ranked and made to live in Nationalist Socialist racial categories, the categories—dreamt up by racial theorists—became real and acquired a terrifying agency in people's lives. As result racial tensions mounted."²⁹ Doris Bergen claims that "Nazi policies regarding the Volksdeutsche exacerbated anti-Semitism by stirring up greed for possessions seized from Jewish victims."³⁰

Indeed, if we accept the argument put forth by Barbara Epstein, that prewar Soviet policies and propaganda left an enduring imprint on the Soviet population, it is equally logical to assume that Nazi propaganda,

disseminated over a three-year period, claimed a certain space in the mentality of locals. The Nazi apparatus continuously used its expertise, skills, and resources to indoctrinate the population in the spirit of racist ideology. During the occupation, numerous local newspapers reiterated the idea of Nazi allies liberating Ukrainians from the tyranny of "Judeo-Communism."³¹ An extraordinary effort was deployed for the indoctrination of the ethnic Germans. For example, even in Transnistria which was under the control of Romanian authorities, Volksdeutsche teachers were sent to Odessa's teachers training institute, where *Sonderkommando R* (Special Command Russia), subordinated directly to the Office of Reichsführer SS Himmler, set up a special curriculum, with readings from Adolf Hitler and Alfred Rosenberg for their ideological preparation.³² Weekly screenings of the "Deutsche Wochenschau," Nazi Germany's official newsreel, were implemented in order to keep Volksdeutsche in Odessa up to date on the Reich's latest propaganda.³³ Some letters of Soviet citizens collected by Ilya Ehrenburg during and after WWII contain indications of antisemitic attitudes in liberated areas of the USSR, including Odessa.³⁴ For example, a Jew who survived one of the deadliest camps of Transnistria (Domanevka) and returned home after liberation, claimed to feel "suffocated by the atmosphere poisoned by fascist propaganda" in his native city. As this correspondent wrote, he was not alone in his feeling: other Jewish survivors, who came back to Odessa, reached similar conclusions, that Nazi ideological "infection" penetrated even the local Soviet institutions, and that antisemitism caught in its grip the entire city — despite a small number of Jewish Odessans who managed to remain alive after the Holocaust.³⁵

Mordechai Altshuler makes a convincing argument when he connects economic issues with the hostility gentiles exhibited toward returning Jews. Housing shortages became one point of contention in the previously occupied territories, as military activity or deliberate demolition by the German army had, in some cities, destroyed from one-third to a half of all residential buildings.³⁶ Individuals who had remained in the occupied territories moved to the apartments of the Soviet citizens who had evacuated east, including Jews. The apartments of all murdered Jews were similarly occupied. Since the returned Soviet authorities forced every illegal tenant to return flats and belongings to their previous holders, individuals returning from the evacuation encountered numerous conflicts. Disagreements over the property of Jews murdered by Nazis and plundered by collaborators proved to be especially sensitive. As Altshuler

underlines, both fear of punishment and a lack of desire to part with acquired property made population in Kiev react to the return of Jewish survivors or their heirs with complaints that “these Jews are here again.”³⁷ According to Jewish survivors’ testimonies, the mass antisemitism attested in postwar Odessa was of a similarly “material” character. Thus, as one of local Jew explained in 1944, in a letter to the famous journalist and writer Ilya Ehrenburg, this anti-Jewish sentiment should have been exclusively understood as a special form of “love towards Jewish property.” Moreover, the author of the letter anticipated that the hard feelings against Jews will not last too long, since most of the Jewish property was already stolen and the “lovers of such property” would have to “soon understand that there were no more reasons for hostile feelings towards Jewish people.”³⁸

In sum, two reciprocally stimulating factors intertwined during the war period and helped to reanimate attitudes that were considered almost eradicated under the previous Soviet regime. Jewish evacuation to the east (and their left property) together with the Nazi regime’s systematic destruction of remaining Jewry, opened new possibilities for material enrichment by local gentiles. In addition, the intense hatred message towards Jews spread systematically in the territories under Nazi occupation managed to be absorbed at least by some individuals. If Nazi allies’ control of the Soviet territories had persisted for much longer, being continuously accompanied with a strong antisemitic discourse and the state’s anti-Jewish policies, it is entirely possible that the population in that area would eventually develop even deeper animosity towards the Jewish population, which would have matched, or even surpassed the antisemitism of the pre-Soviet era.

The Birth of Official Antisemitism in the USSR

Profoundly shaken by the Jewish genocide unleashed by the Nazis and its allies, and clearly disturbed by a new wave of antisemitism among the Soviet population, a number of Soviet Jewish intellectuals and party activists took the latter issue to the Soviet leadership. For example, an old member of the Communist party, Yakob Grinberg, wrote a personal letter to Iosif Stalin on May 13, 1943, demanding an explanation to the fact that in the Soviet Union, during those “severe times” a muddy wave of “disgusting antisemitism revived and penetrated separate Soviet institutions and even party organizations.”³⁹ In a similar manner, the director of the Central

Oncological Institute, B. Shimelovich, in a letter sent to Gheorghy Malenkov, demanded an inquiry on the activity of the representative of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in the healthcare system. Allegedly, this representative (named Petrov) stressed the Jewish origins of many of the Institute's employees and spoke in an inadmissible manner about what he perceived to be a "Jewish party organization" at the Institute.⁴⁰ Lina Shtern, a famous Soviet biochemist and the director of Institute of Physiology wrote a personal letter to Stalin when the director of the Tropical Institute of the Academy of Science of the USSR, somebody named Serghiev, asked her to fire two Jewish editors of the "Bulletin of Experimental Biology and Medicine" she was leading, under the explanation that Hitler is spreading leaflets, which claimed that Jews are everywhere in the USSR, and this "diminishes the culture of the Russian people." Several days after submitting her letter Shtern was met, on behalf of Stalin, by Gheorghy Malenkov and Nikolai Shatalin. During this meeting Malenkov tried to assure Shtern that all circulating rumors about official antisemitism in Soviet Union are nothing but lies spread by spies and diversionists who reached Soviet rear. He also instructed Shtern to reinstate in their previous positions the Jewish editors she was forced to fire.⁴¹

Nobody was more repelled by manifestations of antisemitism than former Jewish soldiers. These frequently returned to empty homes, where they learned that their entire families were slaughtered by Nazis. In these circumstance any anti-Jewish expression could spark a thunderstorm. A furious letter of four Jewish war veterans from Kiev was sent in September 1945 to Stalin, Beria, and Pyotr Pospelov (chief editor of "Pravda" newspaper). Clearly disturbed by a series of antisemitic manifestations in the city these war veterans sharply attacked the Ukrainian Republic's leadership: the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine and its Council of Ministers. According to the opinion of the authors, this leadership was nothing else but a group of "politically blind people," which made Kiev into "a mob of pogromists, blackhundreds, and hard-core nationalists," and which was promoting a "political course regarding Jews ... which has a lot in common with the course issued earlier from Goebbels' office."⁴² When referring to the impact of this policy on the morale of the Jewish population in Ukraine, the authors shifted dangerously from bitterness and disappointment to visibly menacing warnings. Thus, they affirmed that while many Jews wrote letters to the country's leadership inquiring about this "new course," others committed suicide, or tore apart their Communist Party membership cards "because they considered

unworthy being a member of a party which is pursuing a policy analogical to the fascist party," and there were still other Jews who tried to get outside the borders of the Soviet Union. Here the letter became increasingly daring and warned its readers: "Evidently, while abroad these Jews would tell such things about Kiev and Ukraine that this Republic will become very popular on the pages of the international press."⁴³ The foreign policy card is played again at the end of the letter, when its authors demand a rapid resolution of the situation being described, or "otherwise this will turn into a political scandal of international importance." Stalin, Beria, and Pospelov were reminded that at the press-conference in San-Francisco (April-June 1945), a Soviet representative was already asked about the situation of the Jewish population in Ukraine, a question which "was diplomatically avoided." The authors stressed that Jewish people were very united and when pressed by need they could defend their rights with all forces available to them, and if necessary they could even demand the involvement of an "international tribunal."⁴⁴

One important Jewish institution that became prominent during WWII was the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. Created by the Soviet leadership in order to build international support for the Soviet Union's war effort, the Committee became increasingly active in defending Jewish rights and promoting interests of the Jewish population in the USSR. In 1943, for example, leaders of the committee sent a letter to Alexandr Sherbakov, the head of the Main Political Administration of the Red Army, expressing concern over an article discussing the subject of people decorated for their military service in the Red Army. The authors of the letter, Solomon Mikhoels and Shakhno Epstein, criticized the nondisclosure (*umolchanie*) of the exact number of Jewish soldiers and officers decorated for war merit and warned that this silence "plays into the hands of hostile elements both inside the USSR and outside its borders."⁴⁵

With another occasion Mikhoels and Epstein wrote a letter to the prime-minister of the Soviet Union Vyacheslav Molotov. They brought to Molotov's attention "the extraordinarily difficult material and moral situation of the Jews who remained alive after the fascist destruction" and underlined the indifference of local authorities towards the victims of the catastrophe, the reluctance to help former victims to recover their houses and property.⁴⁶ Curiously, this letter prompted Molotov's inquiry on this subject and two weeks later Lavrenty Beria submitted a report with his recommendations on how to resolve the problem:

i) to instruct Nikita Khrushchev (first secretary of Ukraine) to take all necessary measures in order to organize the employment and living conditions of the Jews who suffered under occupation;

ii) to send a representative of the government in the region of Chernovitsy and Mogilev-Podolsk in order to check the reasons of conglomeration of the Jewish population in this area and to help them to return to their houses, or offer temporary housing for those whose native places were not yet liberated;

iii) to instruct the prosecutor of the USSR to investigate the cases of two Jews that were beaten (one pupil from Gorky and one man from Buzuluk);

iv) to recommend to Mikhoels and Epstein in the future to send all complaints and requests received from Jewish citizens to corresponding institutions.⁴⁷

Certainly, this episode demonstrates the high authority of Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee and the confidence of its leaders in dealing with the central officials. Yet, Beria's final recommendation, advising the Committee to use regular channels of appeal, discloses a faint note of annoyance over the methods deployed by Mikhoels and Epstein. Over the time, some bureaucrats would come to the conclusion that this institution was becoming a "certain kind of ministry of Jewish affairs," a body which felt entitled to involve in many more issues than those assigned by the Party during WWII.⁴⁸

Clearly, Mikhoels and Epstein's petition questioned the efficiency of a number of Soviet bureaucrats and forced them to justify their actions. The Ministry of State Control (Narkomat Goskontrolya) was one of the institutions brought under investigation from the message received by Molotov, since one of the accusations blamed local administrations of ignoring the Jewish population when distributing donations received from abroad. The Ministry's report submitted to Molotov announced that an analysis of a number of organizations from the Ukrainian SSR, Belorussian SSR, and RSFSR, established that the Jewish population, in fact, had received more donations than the rest of population (about 72 percent of Jewish employees of the organizations examined were among the direct recipients).⁴⁹ This report concluded that Mikhoels and Epstein presented an "unfounded reclamation," which was "the fruit of light generalizations of separate facts, which cannot characterize the general situation."⁵⁰

The attempts to appeal directly to leading organs, while simultaneously circumventing local authorities, were not novel in the USSR, nor was it used exclusively by the Jewish population to file its complaints. Personal

letters/denunciations/petitions were continuously sent both by Soviet elites and masses to various organs and leaders, but a variety of factors, including a new political context, new sensitivities related to population's wartime experiences, and new challenges faced by the Soviet state, had altered the paradigm through which Stalin's bureaucracy responded to these efforts during WWII. Besides, a permanent background of this "war on paper" was the competition of individuals and institutions for predominant influence and favors (which usually quickly changed under the Stalinist regime). Correspondingly, each message of complaint could become an instant weapon used against bureaucrats in charge for that area of activity. Those bureaucrats tried to protect themselves with all available means, carefully maneuvering in the shifting ideological space delineated by Stalin's leadership.

About one year later after Mikhoels and Epstein's message to Sherbakov, another message was sent to Alexandr Sherbakov by the secretary of the Soviet Information Bureau—a leading Soviet news agency. This note bluntly accused the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee of nationalism and argued that by its focus on a "narrow nationalistic, bourgeois-Jewish character" harms the position of the Soviet Union. Its author masterfully manipulated a central piece of Nazi rhetoric that probably disquieted many Soviet leaders (even if carefully avoiding to be mentioned in public): the allegation that in the Soviet Union "the Jews are ruling, that everything is taken in the hands of Jews." This is connected to a daring argument:

But, if the hitlerites would collect all materials submitted by the Jewish committee, they could use them for demonstrating their mendacious theses. Because the materials of the committee sustained the idea that on the Soviet front the most active, the most advanced, and those leading everybody else, generals, officers, and soldiers, are the Jews. Because it is in the materials of the committees that one can sustain the idea that in the Soviet rear, the most distinguished, prominent scholars, engineers, writers, architects who are leading the rest — are Jews.⁵¹

The war brought a change in the state's perspective towards Soviet Jews. Previously, for over two decades Bolsheviks saw in this group a historically underprivileged and marginalized group, with strong revolutionary credentials, eager to build socialist society and to amalgamate into a *Soviet citizen*. Hence, the regime promoted Jews in increasing numbers to various central and local governmental posts and sought to welcome

and empower its Jews, taking a constructivist and interventionist approach toward Jewish agricultural resettlement and education as means of furthering modernization.⁵² In part, the interwar policy convinced many young Jews from the Soviet Union to leave behind their Jewish roots, usually represented by their families' traditional life and religion. When the Second World War broke out and the slaughter of the Jewish population by the Nazis took place, Soviet Jewry took a reversed path: it began to develop a more acute sense of national identity and became more sensitive to Jewish interests and anti-Jewish feelings.

In part, due to the activity of Anti-Fascist Jewish Committee and the public presence of other influential individuals of Jewish origins (such as Ilya Ehrenburg), Soviet Jewry was emerging as a strong and cohesive community, with high-profile, outspoken representatives. Confident in their domestic and international political support, the Committee had the extreme imprudence to submit to Molotov a proposal regarding the creation of a *Jewish Soviet Socialist Republic*. According to the authors of this project, this should have helped "to make fully equal the situation of Jewish masses among brotherly nations (*s tsel'iu polnogo uravnenia polozhenia evreiskikh mass sredi bratskikh narodov*)" of the Soviet Union. Moreover, the committee openly qualified as a failure the Birobidzhan project, which created a Jewish Autonomous Region in the Far East in 1934: "the experience of Birobidzhan because of various causes, primarily because of insufficient mobilization of all possibilities, as well as its extreme distance from the location of the majority of Jewish working masses, did not produced the necessary effect."⁵³ Instead, Jewish leaders proposed to create a new Jewish republic on the territory of Crimea, which was deemed more suitable for this purpose. The idea turned to be a dangerous political initiative — later the members of the Committee will be put under the accusation of attempting to promote "the plan of American imperialists" to create "a Jewish state in Crimea."⁵⁴

In time, this new type of visibility of the Soviet Jews, their intense political and national activism, their meaningful ties with the capitalist world, attracted inevitable suspicions of the group's loyalty to the Stalinist regime. In the eyes of Stalin and his circle, the Jewish elites acquired a menacing profile of a distinctly powerful group, which claimed a special place and special treatment for Soviet Jewry, by invoking the tragedy of an unparalleled loss during the war. The Soviet leadership proceeded as it knew best through a well-established approach to potentially dangerous internal actors: it erased the category "Jews" from the rubric of the "trustworthy nation" and penciled in "potential enemies of the [Soviet] state."

NOTES

- ¹ Joshua Rubenstein and Vladimir Naumov, eds., *Stalin's Secret Pogrom: The Postwar Inquisition of the Anti-Fascist Jewish Committee* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001).
- ² From 1939 - Upravlenie Kadrov, See Gennady Kostyrchenko, *Tainaia politika Stalina. Vlasti i antisemitizm* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 2003), p. 6. Similar ideas are expressed by Kostyrchenko in his other studies: Gennadii Kostyrchenko, *V plenu u krasnogo faraona. Politicheskie presledovaniia evreev v SSSR v poslednee stalinskoe desiatiletie* (Moskva: Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniia, 1994); Gennady Kostyrchenko, *Out of the Red Shadows: Anti-semitism in Stalin's Russia* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1995); Gennady Kostyrchenko, *Tainaia politika Stalina. Vlast' i antisemitizm* (Moskva: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 2003); Gennady Kostyrchenko, *Stalin protiv "kosmopolitov." Vlast' i evreiskaia intelligenciia v SSSR* (Moskva: ROSSPEN, 2010).
- ³ Antonella Salomoni, "State-Sponsored Anti-Semitism in Postwar USSR. Studies and Research Perspectives," *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish Questions*, no.1, 2010. Konstantin Azadovskii and Boris Egorov, "From Anti-Westernism to Anti-Semitism," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 4:1, Winter 2002.
- ⁴ D. Nadjafov, Z. Belousova, eds., *Stalin i kosmopolitizm, 1945-1953. Dokumenty Agitpropa TsK* (Moscow: MFD: Materik, 2005), p.10.
- ⁵ Jonathan Brent, Vladimir Naumov, *Stalin's Last Crime: The Plot Against the Jewish Doctors, 1948-1953* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers), 2003.
- ⁶ Kopstein and Wittenberg compiled in their study a pogrom data base for Poland, which included 37 pogroms across 231 localities. See Jeffrey Kopstein and Jason Wittenberg, "Deadly Communities: Local Political Milieus and the Persecution of Jews in Occupied Poland," *Comparative Political Studies*, 44, no. 3 (March 2011): 259-293.
- ⁷ Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors. The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton University Press, 2001).
- ⁸ Karen Sutton, *The Massacre of the Jews of Lithuania* (Jerusalem: GEFEN Publishing House, 2008); W. Benz and M. Neiss, eds., *Judenmord in Litauen: Studien und Dokumente* (Berlin, 1999); Vladimir Solonari, "Patterns of Violence: The Local Population and the Mass Murder of Jews in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, July-August 1941," *Kritika: Exploration in Russian and Eurasian History* 8, 4 (Fall 2007): 749-87.
- ⁹ Omer Bartov, "White Spaces and Black Holes: Eastern Galicia's Past and Present," in *The Shoah in Ukraine: History, Testimony, Memorialization*, Ray Brandon and Wendy Lower, eds. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008), 322.

- ¹⁰ Philip Friedman, "Ukrainian-Jewish Relations during the Occupation," in *Roads to Extinction: Essays on the Holocaust*, ed. Ana J. Friedman (New York, Philadelphia, 1980), 191.
- ¹¹ Yitzhak Arad, "The Local Population in the German-Occupied Territories of the Soviet Union and its Attitude toward the Murder of the Jews," in *Nazi Europe and the Final Solution*, eds. D. Bankier and I. Gutman (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2003).
- ¹² Barbara Epstein, *The Minsk Ghetto, 1941-1943. Jewish Resistance and Soviet Internationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 42-43.
- ¹⁴ Ray Brandon and Wendy Lower, eds., *Introduction, The Shoah in Ukraine: History, Testimony, Memorialization* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2008), 14.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶ Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: the Second World War and the Fate of Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 271-275. As Weiner concludes, the majority of individuals on this territory were forced by the circumstances "to weight their greed and resentment [against Jews] against the trauma of living in the midst of an ongoing genocide."
- ¹⁷ Mordechai Altshuler, "Antisemitism in Ukraine towards the End of the Second World War," *Jews in Eastern Europe* 3, no. 22 (Winter 1993): 40-81.
- ¹⁸ Karel Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule* (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 431. Berkhoff also reproduced a fragment of the assessment of the situation in 1945 Kiev by a Western visitor: "I found them [Jews] in large numbers in Government offices and junior civil servants, as clerks in municipality-owned businesses or State factories. In fact they seemed to be the backbone of many of the institutions. But I don't think this was making them any more popular."
- ¹⁹ Gennady Kostyrchenko, *Tainaia politika Stalina. Vlasti i antisemitism* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnoshenia, 2003), p. 242.
- ²⁰ Gennady Kostyrchenko, *Stalin protiv "kosmopolitov." Vlast' i evreiskaia intelligenciia v SSSR* (Moskva: ROSSPEN, 2010), p. 93.
- ²¹ *Gosudarstvennyi antisemitism v SSSR, 1938-1953*, editor Gennady Kostyrchenko (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Materik, 2005), document No. 2-4, p. 32-33.
- ²² *Ibid.*
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 34
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²⁵ Altshuler, "Antisemitism in Ukraine," 40-81.

- 26 Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2004), 224, She cites material from TsDAHO Ukrainy, 1/20/892 (5/1/45).
- 27 Timothy Snyder, "'To Resolve the Ukrainian Problem Once and for All': The Ethnic Cleansing of Ukrainians in Poland, 1943-1947," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 1, no. 2 (1999): 91-92.
- 28 Brown, *A Biography of No Place*, 218.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 218.
- 30 Doris Bergen, "The Nazi Concept of 'Volksdeutsche' and the Exacerbation of Anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe, 1939-1945," *Journal of Contemporary History* 29, no. 4 (October 1994): 572.
- 31 Oleksandr Melnyk, *Behind the Frontlines: War, Genocide and Identity in the Kherson Region of Ukraine, 1941-1944*, (MA thesis) University of Alberta, p. 48, note 114. Melnyk states that every issue of the Kherson newspaper Holos Dnipra contained vitriolic attacks against "Judeo-Communists."
- 32 Eric Steinhart, "Policing the Boundaries of 'Germandom' in the East: SS Ethnic German Policy and Odessa's 'Volksdeutsche,' 1941-1944," *Central European History* 43 (2010): 96.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 61.
- 34 Mordechai Altshuler, Yitzhak Arad, Shmuel Krakowski, eds., *Soviet Jews Write to Ilya Ehrenburg, 1943-1966* (Jerusalem: The Centre for Research and Documentation of East-European Jewry, The Hebrew University, Yad Vashem, 1993).
- 35 *Ibid.*, Letter no. 9, p. 140-142.
- 36 Altshuler, "Antisemitism in Ukraine towards the End of the Second World War," 47.
- 37 Berkhoff, *Harvest of Sorrow*, 431.
- 38 Mordechai Altshuler, Yitzhak Arad, Shmuel Krakowski, eds., *Soviet Jews Write to Ilya Ehrenburg, 1943-1966*, p. 140.
- 39 *Gosudarstvennyi antisemitism v SSSR, 1938-1953*, Letter of Y. Grinberg to I.V. Stalin, document No. 2-8, p. 36.
- 40 *Gossudarstvennyi antisemitism*, Letter of B.A. Shimelovich to G.M. Malenkov, 19 June, 1944, document No. 2-12, p. 39-40.
- 41 *Stalin protiv "kosmopolitov,"* p. 109-110.
- 42 *Gossudarstvennyi antisemitism*, p. 69, 71.
- 43 *Gosudarstvennyi antisemitism*, p.70.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 71.
- 45 *Ibid.*, p. 35
- 46 *Gosudarstvennyi antisemitism*, p. 50
- 47 *Ibid.*, p.52
- 48 *Stalin protiv "kosmopolitov,"* p. 145.
- 49 *Ibid.*, p. 59-61.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Gosudarstvennyi antisemitism*, p. 48-49.

⁵² For more about Soviet resettlement project of Jews in Crimea and Southern Ukraine, see: Jonathan Dekel-Chen, *Farming the Red Land: Jewish Agricultural Colonization and Local Soviet Power, 1924-1941* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

⁵³ *Gosudarstvennyi antisemitism*, p. 47.

⁵⁴ D. Nadjafov, Z. Belousova, eds., *Stalin i kosmopolitizm, 1945-1953. Dokumenty Agitpropa TsK* (Moscow: MFD: Materik, 2005), p.15.

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ECONOMIC COOPERATION AS A PROMOTER OF PEACE AND STABILITY: THE BLACK SEA REGION

The idea that economic cooperation promotes peaceful relations between countries has a long history, and is ascribed to several classical liberal thinkers. Already in the 17th century, a French political writer Émeric Crucé concluded that wars could be reduced by the expansion of commerce: trade brought individuals of different nations into contact with one another and created common interests.

In *The Spirit of the Laws*, Baron of Montesquieu (1689-1755) declared that

the natural effect of commerce is to bring about peace. Two nations which trade together render them reciprocally dependent: if one has an interest in buying the other has an interest in selling; and all unions are based upon mutual needs.

The importance of using international economic cooperation to bring nations to peace was emphasized by Immanuel Kant in his publication of *Perpetual Peace*. The Kantian concept of the pacific consequences of commerce was largely explored by the economists, notably by the Manchester school of “commercial liberalism”. This school was formed on the basis of trade diplomacy, also known as Cobdenism, after Richard Cobden, the British politician who defined economic cooperation as a moral issue, as it maintains the right of people to exchange, consequently, brings “men together, thrusting aside the antagonism of race, and creeds and language, and uniting us in the bonds of eternal peace”. Hereafter, the influence of commercial liberalism can be found in the writings of different economists, such as Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Frederic Bastiat, based on the principle that peace gradually emerges from commerce in a natural process, especially the commerce based on free trade.

People, as rational actors, will prefer to exchange for improving their wealth as it is impossible to produce everything by oneself. Along with

Adam Smith, David Ricardo (1772–1823) also considered in positive way the open trade where nations improve their well-being as they are able to purchase goods whose production is cheaper elsewhere, while expanding the market for their own products. Similarly, French economist Frederic Bastiat (1801–1850) emphasized the political benefits of trade observing that when borders impede the flow of goods, armies will cross borders.

Until recently, there were few empirical studies for determining the liberal concept of positive connection between economic cooperation and peace. The majority of these studies is focused mostly on the question of the impact of interdependence/trade on peace/conflict and is realized by a small number of American scholars. In whole, the statistical studies provide a mixed set of findings because of using different spatial and temporal domains, varying measure and employment of various sets of control variables.

Solomon W. Polachek (1980) found the inverse relationship between trade and conflict: if conflict decreases trade, the trade decreases conflict. Further in joint publication with Seiglie (2006), they conclude that any unfavorable gains from trade reduce the marginal cost of conflict, and that, “only through mutual dependence can equilibrium come about where peace remains solid and secure”.

Oneal and Russett (1997) have found that bilateral trade flows reduce the risk of war, particularly if the level of these trade flows is high, as this augments the opportunity cost of conflict.

This case also was strongly supported by Mansfield and Pevehouse (2000). These scholars have made a remarkable contribution in studying the trade–security linkage in the context of preferential trading partnership – on bilateral and regional levels. Their proposition is that the ‘conflict-inhibiting’ effect of economic cooperation will grow larger and stronger as trade flows rise, and that “heightened commerce will be more likely to dampen hostilities between economic partners than between other states”.

At the same time, the other group of scholars opposes these results arguing that trade can actually cause conflict. Catherine Barbieri (1996) assumes that the relationship between trade and conflict is positive for some dyads, but negative for others. She assumes that the explanation for difference resides in whether the relationship is symmetrically or asymmetrically dependent. Her findings, in general, develop a negative relationship between economic cooperation and peace. In late publications, she accepts that the high level trade may have the pacifying effect on dyadic relations.

Despite some criticism, most of the concepts underline that peace can be regarded as an outcome of good commercial cooperation. The main argument of this approach is that with increasing interdependence among countries, connected together by economic cooperative ties, conflict is leveled out.

Along with interdependence, scholars mention also other variables that contribute to creating an atmosphere of peace and stability. These include internal stability, strong institutions, like-minded governments, compatible market economies, well-defined borders and democracy. Democracy is considered a necessary ingredient by some; it constitutes much of the liberal peace theory. In particular, democracy allows those interest groups that have much to lose from a potential conflict to influence foreign policy with their vote; at the same time, Polachek, Robst and Chang (1999) conclude that democracies trade more than non-democracies, and as a result fight less.¹ Others argue that democracy might come after trade; that is, trade promotes economic development, which ultimately results in democracy. Many regional schemes for cooperation have proceeded on the faith that interdependence in the economic field can potentially soften political tension and competition between states.

Referring to the argument that the mutual economic cooperation fosters peace between countries and the regionalism stimulates the economic cooperation and growth, the formation of regional organizations were chosen in many regions as an efficient way of dealing with security tensions between neighboring countries, namely as a means of reducing frictions between antagonistic neighbors.

The idea of positive influence of regional economic cooperation to peace and stability underlies the modern successful regional integrations like EU, MERCOSUR, ASEAN, etc.

Interdependence promotes peace

"We live in the era of interdependence".² With these words R. Keohane and J. Nye begin their paper "Power and interdependence", giving the definition of interdependence as the situation characterized by the mutual influence between states and non-states actors in different countries. This definition of "mutual dependence" is very similar to David Baldwin's (1980) stating of interdependence, namely, "international relationships that would be costly to break".³

In the above-mentioned publication Keohane and Nye emphasize the positive role of interdependence noting that the “rising interdependence is creating a brave new world of cooperation to replace the bad old world of international conflict”.⁴ Nowadays the growth of interdependence is one of the main factors of globalizing world that has direct impact to the promotion and maintenance of peace and stability.

The questions of whether and how interdependence affects international conflict have received increased attention since the end of the Cold War, but it is not a new concept. This issue was always actual in the opposition of liberal and realist international theories.

All liberalist arguments hypothesize that interdependence decreases international conflict and fosters cooperative political relations. The realists affirm that the heightened interdependence may actually stimulate belligerence based on thesis that the states are interested to minimize their dependence on foreign commerce: as trade flows and the extent of interdependence increase, so do the incentives for states to take military actions to reduce their economic vulnerability.

For distinguishing the mutual dependence – interdependence – from the direct dependence, it is necessary to define two basic components of interdependence: sensitivity and vulnerability. Sensitivity is the extent to which one country is affected by action of another, whereas vulnerability is the extent to which a country can insulate itself from the costly effects of events that occur elsewhere.⁵ The key difference between sensitivity and vulnerability interdependence connected to the costs that countries would bear if the relations between them would be disrupted. So it is possible to give another definition of interdependence as the highly sensitive and vulnerable state of countries to each other.

However, the scholars mention also the possibility of unbalanced interdependence that brings to direct sensitivity or vulnerability of one country from another. They focus on (mutual benefits) and negative (asymmetric or costly) aspects of interdependence. It is asymmetries in dependence providing sources of influence for actors in their dealing with one another: even this one-sided dependence could be a source of conflict between countries. But according to their co-authored paper “Conflict and interdependence: East-West trade and linkages in the era of détente” (1982), Mark Gasiorowski and Solomon Polachek concluded that trade creating a degree of interdependence between US and Warsaw Pact countries provided the incentives to reduce their mutual hostilities; in addition the “asymmetries in the benefits associated with trade were

seen as leading to greater conflict reduction on the part of the participant that benefits more".⁶ Moreover, Oneal and Russett found that even asymmetrical interdependence fosters peaceful relations.⁷

There are different measures of interdependence. The frequently used is the ratio of trade to GDP, which is valid for both sensitivity and vulnerability interdependence. In view of sensitivity interdependence, it shows the level of connection of commercial partners' economies. For the calculation of vulnerability interdependence, this ratio is also valid as commerce between countries represents an important part of each country's total economic output and it is costly for either partner to replace the trade conducted with the other. But this argument is not sufficient in the case of vulnerability as states with a big level of trade can easily locate close substitutes for the goods are not very dependent on each other. At the same time, states conducting little trade that would have great difficulty locating substitutes for the goods may be highly vulnerable. So for calculations of vulnerable interdependence it is necessary to consider also the strategic nature of trading goods; the more essential and strategic trading goods the greater interdependence.

Along with trade, especially trade in strategic goods, the scholars mention the important role of capital flow – foreign direct investment (FDI) – and of international institutions as the conventional measures of economic interdependence, particularly important among such institutions are preferential trading arrangements (PTAs).

Thus the economic cooperation promotes peace and stability by deepening the interdependence between countries through different channels, where trade, FDI and PTAs may be considered the important ones.

Trade reduces conflict

The liberal school usually focuses on trade as the most important component of interdependence and supports the proposition that trade decreases international conflict.

One country is not able to produce all it needs as efficiently as another. The existence of comparative advantages enables different countries to increase their own welfare through trade. Loss of existing trade because of conflict would involve the loss of welfare gain, that is why trading countries with significant trade relations would engage in less conflict for not sustaining the welfare losses associated with lost trade.

Therefore the countries that engage in trade will be peaceful, because they do not want to face a potential reduction, due to a conflict, of welfare gains from trade.⁸

So trade and conflict appear to be truly interdependent. The model is simple: if conflict leads either to the cessation or to a weakening of the terms of trade, then both the price of conflict as well as benefits from cooperation are proportional to the lost gains from trade. The higher these gains from trade losses, the less incentive to clash and the more motivation to collaborate.

The empirical studies on trade and conflict relationship are quiet recent and rely mostly on three main hypothesis confirming that more trade improve more peace and stability. Firstly, more trade means more economic cooperation and, consequently, more economic interdependence between the countries. This increases economic growth and welfare of countries and the costs of severing such economic links; because conflict or even the threat of it tends to disrupt normal trading partners. Secondly, more trade means more interaction between the peoples and governments; more economic exchange as well social and cultural that results the increased trust. Through communication and transnational ties trade develops the understanding among societies and the potential for cooperation. Finally, secure trading relations reduce the likelihood of war by raising security of access to the partners' supplies of strategic raw materials necessary for growth and prosperity that are often the reason of conflicts.

Many statistical researches were developed by scholars using different variables. The majority of calculations supports the liberal argument that trade reduces conflict. The pioneering research was realized by Solomon Polachek (1980, 1982) basing on theory of comparative advantages providing evidence of "a strong and robust negative association between conflict and trade": the conflict reduces trade and, consequently, a cost of conflict is the lost gains from trade.

The further investigation of S. Polachek with Mark Gasiorowski (1982) on this topic but in the context of asymmetric interdependence: trade between the US and Warsaw Pact countries. Again, the results indicated that trade reduced peace. But the relationship appeared to be nonlinear: the countries that are more dependent on trade avoid more conflict. In 1992 Polachek and McDonald realized a new research adding import demand elasticity as an independent variable. Along with supporting the

previous result of nonlinear relationship, the new findings concluded that more inelastic the import demand the smaller the probability of conflict.

Edward Mansfield's study (1994) is very important as it supports the argument of economic liberalism linking the increased trade to less conflict and at the same time it uses the variables usually regarded as the strategic causes of war.

The all results of previous mentioned analysis indicates that international commerce promotes peace among countries: a percentage increase in trade leads to a proportional percentage decline in conflict; according to Polachek (1982) a 6 percent increase in trade lowers the conflict by about 1 percent.

However, many scholars emphasizes that the correlation trade-conflict depends on trade's importance to the exporter and to the importer where the main factor is the strategic feature of particular traded commodities to an economy of both countries.

The argument that "conflict will be most sensitive to bilateral trade in strategic goods"⁹ was supported not just by liberals, but also by some representatives of realist school. Later, Polachek and McDonald (1992) identify the goods as being strategic; specifically, raw materials, minerals, fuels, and heavy manufacturers. The causality from trade to conflict is more frequent in food and live animals, beverages and tobacco, and machines and transport equipment.

Some statistical tests demonstrate also that higher level of free trade, rather than of trade alone, fosters peace more, because free trade removes protective barriers to trade and enhances the growth of economic exchange volume between countries. Consequently, it heightens the level of trade and the next following interdependence.

For Richard Cobden, free trade was expected to promote peace by bringing nations into a relationship of economic dependence in which they would recognize that their own wealth and prosperity depended on others, because disruption of commercial ties by war would be against a country's interest, dependence would lead to a reduction in conflict.¹⁰

This idea that trade has a pacifying effect on interstate conflict mainly when there are minimal barriers to trade were corroborating by different liberalists. John R. Oneal and Bruce M. Russett (1997) also underlines the positive effect of free trade to reduce international warfare confirming that "as countries become increasingly open to external economic relations, they become more constrained from resorting to the use of force, even against a rival with whom commercial ties are limited".¹¹

Foreign direct investment (FDI) complements trade

Along with trade that extends the interdependence between countries, the liberal thinkers like Montesquieu, Smith, Spinoza also mentioned the important role of capital mobility to increasing peace among nations.

The influence of FDI to international commerce is similar to trade's one. FDI benefits two or more countries that it connects. If countries linked by FDI go to conflict, as a result FDI decreases, as well the welfare gains are lost. Thus, in order to protect these gains, the countries are interested in reduction of conflict and promoting of peaceful cooperation, as in the case with trading partners.

Even some scholars underline the stronger influence of FDI in way to reduce conflict than trade, because FDI has certain characteristics like the long-term perspective. Above it was mentioned that not all trading relations may create vulnerable interdependence which it also depends on strategic nature of goods. If the trading goods are not strategic, there is a possibility to change commercial partners. Even if the trading goods are strategic, the conflict can just held or delay the cooperation and the loss resulting from the termination of trade between countries can be minimized. But it is not the case for FDI, as, in general, it has long-term character. The loss from FDI because of conflict can continue a long time with the cost not being covered. So the countries are more interested to support the peaceful relations for not losing the potential gain source. At the same time, the invested country must demonstrate a stable factor in order to attract the further investments from other countries.

The empirical studies implemented by Solomon Polachek, Carlos Seiglie and Jun Xiang (2006) find that the increase of FDI by 10% decreases the conflict on average for 3%, as well augments the net cooperation for 3,1%.¹² So FDI does not only promote peace, but also complements trade in enhancing interdependence and, consequently, in reducing conflict.

On the basis of results, it is logical to conclude that the reducing the barriers to trade and capital flows can promote a more peaceful cooperation which is main goals of preferential trading arrangements (PTAs).

Economic regionalism in Black Sea region

According to definition of Louise Fawsett and Andrew Hurrell (Regionalism in world politics; regional organization and international

order), regionalism is “the creation of interstate unions on the basis of region”¹³ which is the result of regionalization - the empiric process that brings to different forms of cooperation, integration and rapprochement inside definitive geographical area – region. In the history we had two waves of regionalism; called “old” and “new” regionalism. Like the ‘old regionalism’ of 1950th – 1970th, the new regionalism which began in the mid of 1980th can be understood by its historical context – different structural transformation of global system: the end of bipolarity, elimination of system of state-nations, growth of interdependence and globalization. The regionalism in Black sea region refers to new wave and is based on economic cooperation as the majority of new regionalism.

According to Part IX, article 122 of UN Convention of the Law of the Sea, Montego Bay, 1982, the Black Sea can be defined like “enclosed or semi-enclosed sea” that means a gulf, basin, or sea surrounded by two or more States and connected to another sea or the ocean by a narrow outlet or consisting entirely or primarily of the territorial seas and exclusive economic zones of two or more coastal States”. The coast of Black Sea is shared by six coastal countries: Ukraine, Russia, Georgia, Turkey, Romania and Bulgaria.

The Black Sea is one of the complex and heterogeneous areas of Wider Europe. This region is situated on two continents and includes the territory with surface of 20 mln. km², with population of 370 mln. and annual trade turnover of 300 billion dollars. It is the second region with world oil and gas reserves. This region includes the countries of very different sizes, levels of economic development, military potential, geopolitical interests, as well as the cultural, social and religious traditions (with orthodox and Muslim countries).

Is Black Sea a region? According to the definition of J. Nye, the region is “a limited number of states linked by a geographical relationship and by a degree of mutual interdependence”.¹⁴ The Black sea can be considered as a region where the geographical proximity of states and the level of interdependence is present. This interdependence exists because of a long historical background of different types of interconnections.

The north coasts of Black sea were always connected to Mediterranean countries, even Fernand Braudel, French historian, characterized the Black Sea as “partly Mediterranean”. The Phoenicians were the first who navigated in Black sea, but the Greeks began to improve the trade relations and created the first policies: Tyras, Tomis (Constanta), Trabzon, Pingos (Burgas), Panticapeum, Olbia, Odessos, Kerkintide (Yevpatoria). They were numerous, and especially in the north coast. These city-states were

united and Bospor kingdom was created in 6-5 centuries B.C. that became a part of Rome Empire in 1 century B.C. Even in Greek mythology these connections were shown: the Argonauts with Yason traveled to the north coast of Black sea for Golden Fleece.

After the invasion of Huns the Greek city-states were restored only during the establishment of Byzantine Empire on this territory. During the Byzantines, the regional economy were developed by Italian merchants from Genoa and Venice, but in 15th century all the coast were conquered by Ottomans and the Black sea became an "Ottoman lake".

The strengthening of Russian Empire in 18th century brought the big confrontation in Black Sea region with Ottoman Empire. The desire of Russian tsars to have an exit to "warm sea" was the reason of several Russian-Ottoman wars supported also by European states that underlined the existence of big interest to this region during the history. These wars resulted by the division of coasts between the two states. After the World War II the Russian-Turkish confrontation developed into global confrontation of capitalism (Turkey-NATO) and socialist bloc (USSR, Romania and Bulgaria – Treaty of Warsaw).

Only after the collapse of socialist bloc we had big geopolitical changes in the region that brings to new strategy and many problems like frozen conflicts but at the same time it is the period of "unfreezing" when we see the appearance of regional cooperation among the Black Sea countries.

Despite of instable situation in region, there were always close social connection among the population, and, basically, these relations were constructed on economic cooperation from the beginning.

There were several initiatives of regional cooperation in Black sea region. The first attempt was Prometheus created by Soviet immigrants in the 1920th-30th in Paris with purpose to restore the interdependence of Black sea countries from URSS, but the after the World War II the project was closed. It was the only initiative before the collapse of URSS. After the big geopolitical changes in Black sea region, different cooperative models connected the regional countries like GUAM, BLACKSEFOR, Black Sea Regional Energy Center. But these organizations were based on specific issues and were not able to cover the interest of all regional countries. The most extensive and common initiative goaled to create preferential trading arrangements is BSEC that will be considered further.

Interdependence among Black sea countries

As it was mentioned previously, the increasing interdependence can play an important role in security issues. The situation of interdependence between Black sea countries was always present, especially between countries of socialist bloc. After the collapse of socialist bloc in view of the transition economies the interdependence between some of them were disrupted and is now establishing or reestablishing, but in some cases because of strategic nature it continues to exist. Hereby, the one existing and another reestablishing interdependence of dyadic relations promoting peaceful relations will be considered.

For existing interdependence, the analysis of the Ukrainian-Russian relations after the collapse of URSS is more evident. Comparing the Russian population of the Crimea (about 58%) in Ukraine and of Transnistria (about 30%) in Moldova, it becomes interesting that separatism brought to conflict in Moldova, and not in Ukraine. In this case, it is reasonable to consider the interdependence between Ukraine and Russia. Ukraine was always the transport corridor for Russian products to Europe, and especially for oil and gas; the Ukrainian gas transporting system is second biggest system in Europe. Due to this interdependence, we can conclude that the Crimea avoided the conflict. Therefore, it means that the existence or non-existence of interdependence between the Soviet countries played an important role for modern relations between newly independent states.

As an example of reestablished interdependence, we will review the relations between Georgia and Azerbaijan. After the chute of URSS several conflicts took place in the Caucasus region in view of existing of important national minorities in each state. Despite the significant Azerbaijani minority in Georgia, the conflict became impossible. The reason derived from economic interest of countries. All projects in the Caucasus region coming from Caspian connect Azerbaijan, Georgia and further to Europe or other Western countries. Georgia plays the role of transport corridor for Azerbaijan gas and oil exporting (pipelines Baku-Supsa and Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan) where the both countries have the important gains. In this case, the potential interdependence bringing the gains prevented the conflict.

The above-mentioned examples conclude that the existing and potential interdependence between countries reduces conflict promoting peaceful relations.

NOTES

- ¹ POLACHEK, S.W., ROBST, J., CHANG, Y-CH., *"Liberalism and Interdependence: extending the trade-conflict model"*, in *Journal of Peace Research* Special issue on Trade and Conflict, Volume 36, number 4, July 1999, P.406
- ² KEOHANE, R.O., NYE, J.S., *Power and interdependence*, Second edition, Glenview, Illinois, 1989, p.3.
- ³ BALDWIN, D. A., *"Interdependence and Power: A Conceptual Analysis"*, in *International Organization* 34, 1980, p.484.
- ⁴ KEOHANE, R.O., NYE, J.S., *Power and interdependence*, Second edition, Glenview, Illinois, 1989, p.10.
- ⁵ KEOHANE, R.O., NYE, J.S., *Power and interdependence*, Second edition, Glenview, Illinois, 1989, p.34.
- ⁶ GASIOROWSKI, M., POLACHEK, S.W., *"Conflict and interdependence: East-West trade and linkages in the era of détente"*, in *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 26, No. 4, December 1982, p.728.
- ⁷ ONEAL, J.R., RUSSETT, B.M., *"The classical liberals were right: democracy, interdependence, and conflict, 1950-1985"*, in *International Studies Quarterly*, Volume 41, 1997, p. 21.
- ⁸ REUVENY, R., KANG, H., *"Bilateral trade and political conflict/cooperation: do goods matter?"*, in *Journal of Peace Research*, Volume 35, number 5, September 1998, p. 582.
- ⁹ POLACHEK, S.W., *"Conflict and trade"*, in *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Volume 24, No.1, 1980, p. 118.
- ¹⁰ McMILLAN, S.M., *"Interdependence and conflict"*, in *Mershon International Studies Review*, volume 41, supplement 1, May 1997, p.37.
- ¹¹ Oneal, J.R., Russett, B.M., *"The classical liberals were right: democracy, interdependence, and conflict, 1950-1985"*, in *International Studies Quarterly*, Volume 41, 1997, p. 281.
- ¹² POLACHEK, S.W., SEIGILIE, C., XIANG, J., *"Globalization and international conflict: can FDI increases peace?"*, in *Proceedings of the 10th annual international conference on economics and security*, SEERC, 2006, p. 278, 280.
- ¹³ FAWSETT, L., HURRELL, A., *Regionalism in world politics: regional organization and international order*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1995, p. 11.
- ¹⁴ NYE, J., *International Regionalism*, Little, Brown & Co., Boston, 1968, p. 7.

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THE FATE OF CZERNOWITZ JEWS: GENOCIDE AND MEMORY IN BUKOVINA¹

In his speech on the occasion of receiving the literature prize of the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen in 1958, Holocaust survivor Paul Celan, one of the most prominent post-war poets writing in German, said of his life after Auschwitz:

Only one thing remained reachable, close and secure amid all losses: language. Yes, language. In spite of everything, it remained secure against loss. But it had to go through its own lack of answers, through terrifying silence, through the thousand darknesses of murderous speech. It went through. It gave me no words for what was happening, but went through it. Went through and could resurface, 'enriched' by it all.²

Nothing could stop Celan from writing, not even the fact that he was Jewish, and German the language of his poems. Strangely, the oppressor's language - but also Celan's - reconnected him with the lost world of his homeland. Paul Celan was born in 1920, two years after the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, into a German-speaking liberal Jewish family in the city of Cernăuți,³ then part of Romania. His relation to German culture was not unique. On the contrary, it was typical of most assimilated Jews in Bukovina, a former Habsburg imperial province.

The Fate of Czernowitz Jews: Genocide and Memory in Bukovina, spans three historical periods: the interwar era, the Holocaust years, and the post-war period. A multi-layered social history, my project explores the situation in the city of the Czernowitz and in the Bukovinian countryside, seeking to analyze interethnic relations in the region, especially the nature of relationships between Jews and gentiles. In so doing, I pay particular attention to the social, cultural, religious, and political dimensions of Jews' daily lives in both the urban and rural contexts.

For Czernowitz Jews who were born before World War I through the interwar years, connection with German culture, its language, philosophy, and literature, remained an important part of their German-Jewish identity.

While Yiddish, spoken in nearby villages and supported by followers of Jewish nationalism, remained alive, the circle of German-speakers widened. German culture was a marker of Jewish emancipation and modernization for many Jews integrated within the Habsburg societal order.

Jews formed but one of the ethnic groups in the city. The capital of Bukovina, Czernowitz was culturally, linguistically, and socially diverse, a typical phenomenon of borderland areas. German, Romanian, Ukrainian/Ruthenian, Polish, and Yiddish were spoken widely. These languages were central to the city's vitality, where everyday interactions created a rich multi-dimensional cultural life. Under Habsburg rule, the popular image of Bukovina was a region where different ethnic and religious groups coexisted peacefully under the banner of German cultural hegemony.⁴ Czernowitz became (and has remained) an emblem of successful multiculturalism and creative multilingualism. This picture was fostered in the post-war years mostly by Holocaust survivors from Bukovina. Many were writers, poets, and intellectuals, like the Czernowitz-born poets Paul Celan and Rose Ausländer, and the novelist Aharon Appelfeld. The perception of Czernowitz as a site of vibrant cosmopolitan culture blossoms today as nostalgia about the purported "German-Jewish symbiosis" of the Habsburg Empire in this part of Eastern Europe. For many, the city of Czernowitz is a metaphor for a lost world which disappeared with the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

If Bukovina ever was home to ethnic and religious peaceful coexistence, that multiculturalism was shaken by successive political regimes, radical ideologies, and the destruction wrought by world wars. Romanianization throughout the 1920s aimed at transforming multiethnic Bukovina into an overwhelmingly Romanian province. These policies were reflected in the educational sphere where Romanian became the main language of instruction. Romanian nationalists pushed ever more forcefully for drastic reduction in enrollment of Jewish students from academic institutions, especially from the universities, while Romanians enrolled in large numbers, aiming to dominate all sectors of economic and cultural life.

The local population may have looked longingly to the Communist regime to the east as a happy alternative to forced Romanianization, but the Soviet occupation of Bukovina in June 1940 shattered their illusions. The Soviets quickly imposed their structures and ideology, and deportations to Siberia began to roll. The return of Romania to the region accompanied by the German army brought war, ghettos, forced labor, internment, and

death. Wartime antisemitic policy spelled death and destruction to the Jewish community, but peace did not bring relief. Soviet liberation in 1944 reinstalled the communist regime, which led to a new wave of emigration to Palestine or, through Romania, to the west. Celan chose emigration. He left Czernowitz along with many other uprooted Jewish survivors.

History Background

Bukovina spans the border of modern-day Romania and Ukraine. Established as an official administrative unit of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1775, Czernowitz served as its capital. At that time, 526 Jewish families lived in the region.⁵ The Jewish population increased more than sevenfold during the Habsburg period and by 1910 had grown to 102,919,⁶ making it the third-largest group in the province after Romanians and Ukrainians. This growth was a result of the natural birth rate as well as favorable opportunities offered by economic development which spurred Jewish emigration from Galicia and neighboring countries to Bukovina. Reforms introduced after the 1848 revolution gradually eliminated economic and political discrimination against Jews, culminating in their full emancipation in 1867.

Czernowitz Jews adapted to the dominant Habsburg social order during a century-long process of emancipation and acculturation. The growing Jewish middle class expressed acculturation in the adoption of German language, the acquisition of bourgeois values, and the abandonment of traditional religious observance. The rural Jewish community of Bukovina by contrast continued to speak Yiddish, retained conservative traditions, and remained attached to Orthodox beliefs and practice. Hassidic courts centered in the market towns of Sadagora, Vizhnitsa, and Boyany exerted a strong influence in the Bukovina countryside and far beyond the province borders.⁷

Highly educated and with robust connections with the rest of Europe, Bukovinian Jews had a formidable influence on the economic, political, social, and cultural life in the region and in the German-speaking part of the Habsburg Empire in general before World War I. The Jewish population in Czernowitz counted many scholars, artists, and writers, and Jews took an active part in the political life of the city as well. The citizens of Czernowitz elected a Jewish mayor twice: Dr. Eduard Reiss (1905-1908) and Dr. Salo Weisselberger (1913-1914).

The liberalization of the Habsburg monarchy in the mid-nineteenth century and the relative political independence of Bukovina enhanced the cultural and social activities of all ethnic groups. Indeed, the reforms following the revolution of 1848 shaped the development of the province and of Czernowitz as a city. The capital began to exhibit an ever more visible German character. All cultural institutions in Czernowitz – university, theaters, schools, and daily newspapers – were German. At the same time, however, the city became famous as a place where Bukovinian writers of many ethnicities, including Romanian author Janko Lupul, Ukrainian Yurii Fed'kovych, and German-Jewish Karl Emil Franzos, created and published their works.

The coexistence of ethnic communities, all with strong national aspirations, in Czernowitz before 1914 was complicated but more or less peaceful. World War I put an end to this idyl as the region became a battleground. At the 4 October 1918 session of the Viennese parliament, the Bukovinian Jewish delegate Dr. Benno Straucher voted for joining the province to Austria. At the same time, Ukrainians in Czernowitz sought political union with Ukraine; whereas Romanians demanded union with the Romanian Kingdom.

Both Ukrainians and Romanians claimed Bukovina as their historical land, and part of their respective nations. Their national aspirations had grown noticeably during the second half of the nineteenth century. Both ethnic groups struggled against each other and against the Habsburg Empire within local and imperial institutions to promote their interests in politics, education, and culture. Romanians and Ukrainians accused imperial officials and each other of trying to establish control over the region. As population increase was used as a means to justify territorial claims, both sides tried to prove that the official census was wrong: Romanians complained that Romanians speaking Ukrainian were counted as Ukrainians, and Ukrainians, in turn, claimed that Ukrainians speaking Romanian were categorized as Romanians.⁸ By late autumn of 1918 tensions between these ethnic groups escalated into riots. The Romanian army soon entered the region and incorporated Bukovina into Romania.

Bukovina and its capital Czernowitz underwent major transformations under Romanian rule. Romanian officials occupied all key positions in the administration, and Romanian was declared the official language of Bukovina. Czernowitz was now Cernăuți. Romanian officials tolerated the existing Jewish and Ukrainian schools in the early twenties. But by the end of the decade the government embarked upon a hegemonic language

program to force the population to speak Romanian alone. Newspapers published in German and Ukrainian were censored and required to print the front page in Romanian.⁹ These measures found support among radical nationalist groups.

As Romania sought control over political, cultural, and educational institutions which would produce a local Romanian elite, nationalist discourse colored the interwar period. Politicians and intellectuals embraced nationalism and its inevitable twin, antisemitism; these became the political norm and an expression of Romanian patriotism. According to historian Leon Volovici, being “Romanian became synonymous with being an antisemite.”¹⁰ Indeed, interwar Romania embraced a radical form of antisemitism.¹¹ The Jewish population in the newly acquired territories could not obtain Romanian citizenship easily, and those who already had it were targets of a denaturalization process initiated by the government.

According to historian Vladimir Solonari, Romanian interwar intellectuals and politicians “envisioned the ethnocratic state program project as a development *against* other minorities.”¹² Romanian right-wingers held that ethnic minorities were the problem. Their campaign to privilege Romanians took aim at others, with Jews as the primary target.¹³ Romanian nationalists perceived minorities as “foreigners” and parasites, and right-wing politicians held that they represented both symptom and cause of the Romanian nation’s degradation.¹⁴ The solution to the minorities problem, they declared, was the restoration of Greater Romania and the implementation of an ethnic purification policy to cleanse the nation.

Still, an ethnically and religiously diverse borderland region, Bukovina remained contested territory. World War II provided an opportunity to re-draw the borders and on 28 June 1940 the Romanians withdrew from the Ukrainian part of Bukovina and Bessarabia in response to an ultimatum from the USSR. Soviet troops moved in and the Supreme Soviet decreed (2 August 1940) that northern Bukovina, together with northern Bessarabia and a small part of old Romania containing the town of Herța would become the Chernivtsi *oblast* (region). Cernăuți officially became Chernovtsy, and soon Soviet authorities controlled every aspect of life, implementing Russification, confiscating property¹⁵ and deporting capitalists, *kulaks*, and all alleged enemies to Siberia.¹⁶ Among those deported were shopkeepers, wealthy citizens, former officials, and liberal and socialist intellectuals. Many Jews together with Germans and Romanians were sent to Siberia.

Solonari has argued that many Romanians wanted to go to war with the Soviet Union, and, "Marshal Ion Antonescu was burning with desire to see it happen."¹⁷ To that end, Antonescu, who assumed dictatorial powers in his pro-German government during World War II, sought agreement with Hitler.¹⁸ Although Romania lost northern Transylvania to Germany, it was only with German support that Antonescu could defend the country's territorial integrity and wrest back territories from the Soviet Union.¹⁹ Bucharest embraced the Germans' offer of alliance and Antonescu got his chance to regain the lost eastern provinces of northern Bukovina and Bessarabia when Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941. Territory wrought from Soviet control was given to Romania even though the Reich could have claimed the right of occupation. Bukovina and Bessarabia were formally re-established as provinces of Romania on 4 September 1941.

The Red Army regained these territories in March 1944. The Paris Peace Treaty of 1947 between the Allies and Romania recognized the Soviet-Romanian border that had been established on 28 June 1940. This decision reaffirmed the division of the former Habsburg province and was not challenged with the fall of the Ceaușescu regime in 1989 and the establishment of independent Ukraine in 1991.

Narrative structure

My research indicates that Jews and gentiles in Czernowitz observed clear social boundaries, and I analyze how all ethnic groups maintained their distinctiveness and in what ways each was seen as distinct by the other groups. Still, they lived together without overt conflict prior to World War II. Romanianization policies of the interwar period affected inter-ethnic relations, and a main focus of this section is to chart those shifts.

The region was incorporated into the Soviet Union on 28 June 1940. The Soviets imposed a nationalities policy and nationalization of private property, and arrest and deportation of "political enemies and unreliable elements" ensued, culminating in a wave of repression. These actions were part of a larger "cleansing" campaign implemented in the newly annexed western territories of the USSR.²⁰ My research suggests that the arrests did not aim exclusively at the Jews, yet *mainly* urban middle class Jews became targets of NKVD raids.²¹

Moving to the core of my project, I investigate the responses of various ethnic groups to the mass violence against Jews in different areas of northern Bukovina in July 1941, which began immediately after the Soviet troops retreated. According to the Soviet Extraordinary Commission for the investigation of atrocities of German fascists and their henchmen, 11,347 Jews were killed in the province during summer 1941.²² Archival documents²³ and witness accounts²⁴ provide evidence of mass murder of the Jewish population in a three-day uncontrolled killing action between 6 and 8 July 1941. These days were marked by looting of Jewish homes, destruction of communal institutions such as synagogues and schools, and the public humiliation and death of many Bukovina Jews.

Supported by the German Wehrmacht and Einsatzgruppe D and by the local peasantry, Romanian police and soldiers murdered Jews as they reconquered Bukovina and Bessarabia in late June 1941. They followed the plan dictated by their government for the systematic “ethnic cleansing” of the country: Jews in rural areas were to be killed on the spot, and those living in the cities were spared for time being.

Several mass executions across the reconquered province and an initial concentration in a ghetto were followed by the deportations of many local Jews to Transnistria. This territory was used as a dumping ground and for the imprisonment and execution of Jews from Bukovina and Bessarabia. The organization of a mass murder operation of Jews in Bukovina and Bessarabia fell to Romania, as Germany’s ally. The Romanian military and gendarmerie launched the genocidal campaign by relying on the support of the local population.²⁵ These prearranged actions resulted in the death of approximately 20,000 Jews²⁶ in Bukovina and Bessarabia in July and August 1941. According to Dennis Deletant “the Holocaust in Romania was unlike that in other parts of Europe and the Soviet Union.”²⁷

Most of the Bukovina Jews who survived the summer 1941 murders were deported on foot to Transnistria. Vladimir Solonari has explained that Antonescu’s policy of ethnic homogenization became ever more violent, particularly in Bukovina and Bessarabia. These provinces served as a testing ground for the total ethnic purification of Romania²⁸ and thus sites of a horrendous social engineering experiment carried out by Romanian leaders. The mass character of the deportation shows clearly that Antonescu’s intention was “ethnic cleansing”: to eliminate Jews from these provinces. Of the 147,000 Jews deported to internment camps in Transnistria between 1941 and 1943, at least 90,000 died from typhus, starvation, malnutrition, and atrocities.²⁹

At the same time, as many as twenty thousand Jewish residents of Czernowitz were permitted to remain in the city. Traian Popovici, who was appointed mayor when Czernowitz was returned to Romania, objected to the creation of a ghetto and the deportation of the city's Jews. He continued to protest to the governor and Antonescu himself, arguing that the Jews were vital to the economic stability of the town. Finally, he was ordered to compile lists of Jews exempted from deportation. They were granted so-called "authorizations", working permits issued to professionals, important businessmen, family members, and to people who had no professional skills whatsoever.³⁰ Quite a few important Bukovinian Romanians who were not directly involved in the process, are known to have protested planned deportations, including the former minister of Bukovina in the Bucharest government and head of the provincial National Peasant Party organization, Teofil Sauciuc Săveanu. Others tried to save individual Jews from the horrors of deportation. For example, Cernăuți's Orthodox Metropolitan Tit Simedrea and his councilor Gheorghe Russu are known to have saved at least one Jewish family. It was on Metropolitan Simedrea's order that on New Year eve, 1943, all priests in Cernăuți read a sermon against the hatred of Jews, which asserted that "Jews were human beings created by God." Jewish survivors from the city of Cernăuți also mention support that they received from city residents, sometimes at considerable risk for their benefactors.

Once Jews were defined as "non-useful," they were slated for deportation. The Jews of Cernăuți were brought to Mogilev-Podil'sk on the east bank of the Dniester river by train in cattle cars. From Mogilev-Podil'sk, most would be deported farther to the east, traveling on foot. Before leaving the city, they were body searched for valuables.

In February 21, 1942, in Cernăuți there were still more than 21,000 Jews of whom 16,391 had authorizations issued by the selection commission and about 5,000 who were found "economically non-useful" but who had not been deported by November 13, when Antonescu called a suspension of deportations. For the majority of Jews in the latter category, Popovici signed and issued authorizations before letting them leave the ghetto. Issuing the authorizations constituted, it seems, the main article of accusation against Popovici since he had no authority to do so. In Popovici's confrontation with the Cernăuți antisemites, who were firmly entrenched in the army, secret police, provincial administration, and the city Chambers of Labor and Commerce and Industry, the attack was led by Major Marinescu chief of the governor's office, with the latter's

tacit approval. In June 1942, Marinescu finally prevailed, Popovici was removed and Dimitrie Gales was appointed as mayor. Enduring antisemitic persecution and internment in Czernowitz ghetto, Jews who remained in the city survived the war.

My research has illuminated the reactions of Bukovina Ukrainians and Romanians to the expropriation of Jewish property,³¹ businesses, and jobs in the wartime city. Many gentile Bukovinians pursued selfish interests, and greed and personal enrichment were crucial forces that dictated actions and shaped behavior. Advancement of career prospects in state and public structures loomed large also. Even ideological convictions could not eliminate the corruption of some officials who were in charge of the confiscation and auctioning of Jewish property.³²

I explore the emergence of group conflict during the Romanianization process. On the one hand, this policy triggered the enthusiastic participation of ordinary citizens, but at the same time it created dissatisfaction among those concerned because of its negative economic effects. Many high-ranking managers and businessmen complained to authorities about the replacement of Jewish specialists. Trying to secure the prosperity of their own businesses, many owners applied for “authorizations” for their Jewish workers.³³

The disappointment of those who felt that their personal goals and expectations were not satisfied clearly emerges from the archival records. For instance, files from the collection of the Governance of Bukovina hold evidence that “Christian” workers complained saying that managers kept Jewish specialists in a privileged position.³⁴ Another popular criticism was that an insignificant amount of Jewish property was sold and auctioned.³⁵ At the same time, there were numerous applications by gentile city inhabitants asking for the authorities’ permission to be treated by Jewish medical specialists.³⁶ The gentiles sought their own advantage in all these cases: they wanted Jews’ property and businesses, but they also wanted to continue to be treated by the Jewish doctors. Their sole consideration was what served themselves best.

Romanian authorities applied a variety of inconsistent approaches in implementing anti-Jewish measures. From the beginning of the war, Romania supported German antisemitic race-based policy in many ways. Romanian forces sent Jews to the death camps in Poland, and deported Jews from Bukovina and Bessarabia to ghettos and labor camps in Transnistria. Yet, Romanian anti-Jewish policy was independent of the country’s alliance with Germany and in summer 1942 Marshal Ion

Antonescu changed his mind about acceding to German requests to deport the remaining Jewish population of Romania, mostly in Banat, Transylvania, Wallachia, and Moldavia, to the annihilation centers.

Whereas for Hitler, Jews were a biological threat to the blood purity of the "Aryan" race, Antonescu saw Jews as disloyal, unpatriotic citizens. Communism was the major threat in Antonescu's view. He frequently used the label "Judeo-Bolshevism" in his speeches to characterize Jews, primarily those who lived in Bukovina and Bessarabia. Antonescu's obsession with the Bolshevik menace, along with his policy of "ethnic purification", defined Romanian anti-Jewish policy in the borderland areas.

From the first days of occupation, the Romanian administration launched antisemitic policies³⁷ typically followed by an anti-Soviet propaganda campaign.³⁸ Archival materials reveal that Romanian authorities in Bukovina carried out political background checks to screen out all individuals (primarily those of Jewish and Ukrainian ethnicity) who, allegedly, collaborated with Soviet authorities or communist or leftist organizations.³⁹ They accused the Bukovina Jews of being Bolshevik sympathizers and, spreading the myth of "Judeo-Bolshevism", welcomed voluntary denunciations by citizens. These played a key role in identifying Jews who supposedly supported the Soviets.

The immediate postwar period saw an outbreak of anti-Jewish violence in Eastern Europe, the mass emigration of Jews, and the consolidation of Soviet rule in the region. The Red Army liberated the city in March 1944 and took control of the province. With the Axis in retreat, Jewish survivors sought to go home. They found their return difficult and dangerous. Most returnees had lost their identification papers during deportation. When Soviet soldiers at the city checkpoints asked for their papers attesting to their former residence, they were unable to prove their birthplace. As a result, they were turned away from Chernovtsy. Those fortunate enough to return to their hometown were soon silenced. Soviet authorities introduced a ban on the use of German, the native language for the majority of Jewish city inhabitants. A repressive regime had succeeded a murderous one. Bukovinian Jews who had survived found themselves dealing with oppressive Soviet policies after the war. The Soviet government issued a special decree that allowed and practically demanded the emigration to Romania of Jews who had been Romanian citizens before 1940.⁴⁰ Officially labeled as "evacuation", this policy was another example of the common Soviet practice of population transfer.

Holocaust Memory

Present-day Chernivtsi is a modern city that grew and changed in appearance during the past half century. Fortunately, however, the historic city center was not destroyed during the war. Inhabitants are very proud of the stunning, nineteenth century Central European architecture which distinguishes their city from other Ukrainian towns. Czernowitz as the “Vienna of the East” may have slipped into the mists of the past, but the typical Austrian imperial planning which gave the city its shape, its Viennese-inspired architecture, theaters, parks, squares, churches and synagogues, cafés, and bookstores remain as strong physical reminders of its Austro-Hungarian past.

Yet the buildings carry neither message nor memory. Most of the structures erected by the Jewish community a century ago are used for other purposes today. The largest cinema is located in what once was the most prominent synagogue, for example. Thus the architecture of Czernowitz speaks to a history that is no longer remembered; structural gems enjoyed but not understood or coded by the local population.

The Habsburg myth of multiethnic tolerance is eagerly revived, modified, and put to political use by current local politicians. The war became a major historical event in the regional history according to the official post-war ideology in Soviet Ukraine. It was defined as a liberation and reunification of Bukovinian Ukrainians with Ukrainian people. The victory, the liberation, and the reunification of Bukovina with Soviet Ukraine became the central idea of the region’s Soviet identity. This was the main ideological message sent to the region from the political center dictating interpretation of the war and the entire history of the region. Any local interpretations of the past were suppressed.

Official Soviet interpretation of the war did not recognize the Holocaust. It was quite a challenging task for local authorities to commemorate the war locally. In the city, there were places of mass shootings of the Jews in July 1941 that were widely known by locals. This aspect of Holocaust had to be acknowledged in a Soviet way. In 1945, it was already decided to install a commemorative plaque on river Prut at the site of mass shootings and monuments at different cemeteries with a dedication “to the victims of mass executions and tortures by the German-Romanian occupiers”. These small monuments however were located outside of public attention and poorly maintained.

Local authorities made an emphasis on other war monuments such as the tank of the Red Army which first entered the city on March 25 1944. It was installed in 1946 on the Central Train square. Memorial to high-ranking officers who participated in the liberation of the region; a monument to the fallen soldiers was erected on the premises of the oldest city's cemetery (on Rus'ka street), finally the center piece of war commemorative sites is the monument to the Unknown Soldier on Soborna square. None of the mentioned memorials commemorates local war history, Jewish victims or local heroes. The main purpose was to evoke feelings of deep gratitude for liberation among local population. The installed Soviet war memorials stressed the Ukrainian patriotism and region' belonging to Ukraine. These monuments still function as instruments to localize and enforce Ukrainian identity. Leaving behind the local history of Jewish suffering and Jewish underground in the city, these monuments also manifest the politics of forgetting which consequently leads to erasing the local history.

Today the Jews of Chernivtsi constitute less than 0,5 % of the population of the city. The highly used rhetoric of multiculturalism and interethnic tolerance in Ukrainian Chernivtsi remains a political tool and a cliché which dominates the narrative of the region's past. There are some discontinuities in war commemoration tradition practiced by the local authorities since 1991. This time the main emphasis is made on state-building efforts and Ukrainian nationalism. The following example illustrates this point well. In 2008, a wooden Orthodox Christian Cross was installed on the hill (Turkish bridge) overlooking the territory of the former Jewish ghetto within the downtown. It is necessary to stress that there is no other monument in the area of the ghetto to commemorate Jewish victims. The Orthodox Cross strongly emphasizes the Ukrainian identity, when at the same time (in this case) overshadows (if not openly ignores) the memory of Others.

Another monument to soldiers of Bukovinian battalion was installed in Chernivtsi in 1995. The controversy behind is that members of this military unit collaborated in the massacre in Babyn Yar in 1941. This fact is not recognized by the local nationalist-oriented intelligentsia and Ukrainian nationalist oriented diaspora.

Another example is the Jewish Museum. In 2008, the Bukovinian Museum of Jewish History and Culture was opened in Chernivtsi. The problem with this institution is that it fails to represent the local Holocaust history and fate of Czernowitz Jews during wartime. The whole exhibition ends up by 1940. While answering the inquiries about this lacuna, the

staff members unofficially told that the major problem is the representation of collaboration and participation in the mass killings of local population as well the role of OUN in those murderous actions.

While there is some recognition of the Holocaust by the local Ukrainian public, there are obvious difficulties in accepting former Jewish neighbors as victims. The post-communist collective memory in Ukraine, while maintains the old Soviet myths to some degree, it is also colored by alternative non-Soviet war representation, which is a nationalist one.

Literature Review

Research on the Holocaust in Ukraine has developed rather slowly. First, scholars lacked access to Soviet regional archives until 1991, when successor states opened repositories. Then too, Ukraine's pre-war and wartime history of partition at the hands of Poland, Russia, Romania, Hungary, and Germany placed considerable linguistic demands on scholars trying to gain an overview of how the Holocaust unfolded in that region. During the past two decades a number of case studies have yielded important insights into the course of the Holocaust at the local level in Eastern Europe.⁴¹ These projects have proven fruitful as they elucidate the dynamics of mass destruction on a micro scale. They have shown that the Holocaust in central parts of Europe, where Jews were incarcerated in ghettos and later transported to death camps, differs from the Holocaust in the east. From the first days of war, the largest Jewish community in the Soviet Union faced death. In the occupied Soviet territories Jews were murdered in open-air mass killings and buried in graves often dug by the victims themselves or with the assistance of local people.⁴²

One of the earliest works to focus on Antonescu's treatment of the Jews was Matatias Carp's *Holocaust in Romania: Facts and Documents on the Annihilation of Rumania's Jews, 1940-1944*,⁴³ first published in Romanian in 1946 and translated into English in 1994. Another pioneering study, Alexander Dallin's *Odessa, 1941-1944: A Case Study of Soviet Territory under Foreign Rule*, originally published in 1957,⁴⁴ is remarkable for a several reasons, not the least of which is the depth of Dallin's research. Comparing the experience of Odessa under Romanian rule and German occupation, Dallin explored each regime's aims and policies through the prism of those who observed or experienced their effect. His findings regarding Romanian war policies and the nature of the

Romanian occupation of Odessa remain significant for the interpretation of Romanian occupation policies in the east.

Yet, as original as Dallin's work was at the time, he did not have access to the Soviet and Romanian archives and documents available now. The persecution and mass killing of Jews in the Soviet territories have been of considerable interest to historians since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Holocaust scholarship on the territories under Romanian administration has grown significantly in the past twenty years. These works include a number of studies focused on prewar antisemitism in Romania (Leon Volovici), nation-building and regionalism (Irina Livizeanu), ethnic cleansing policy (Vladimir Solonari), deportations, ghettos, and camps (Dennis Deletant, Dalia Ofer).⁴⁵ Jean Ancel's magisterial three-volume work reconstructs the fate of Jews deported to Transnistrian camps,⁴⁶ while other scholars like Radu Florian and Paul Shapiro have taken a regional approach to examine the destruction of Romanian and Ukrainian Jews during the Antonescu era.⁴⁷

A number of leading scholars have focused on wartime Romanian policies and Antonescu's role in the Holocaust. Radu Ioanid examines systematic measures to eliminate Romanian Jews and Roma implemented by the dictator.⁴⁸ Dennis Deletant analyzes Antonescu's political activities in *Hitler's Forgotten Ally*,⁴⁹ situating him within the broader context of political and military events of World War II. Vladimir Solonari in a recently published study argues that the persecution of Jews and Roma by the Romanian government was not a response to pressure from the country's ally, Nazi Germany, but rather stemmed from the vision of an ethnically pure Romania. In his analysis of the country's interwar political and intellectual climate and practices during its alliance with the Nazis, Solonari sheds valuable light on the genocidal activities of wartime Romania.⁵⁰

My study of Czernowitz fits, too into the rich field of urban studies. Research on wartime East and Central European cities has grown markedly in recent years, and *The Fate of Czernowitz Jews* gains much from Delphine Bechtel's and Eliyahu Yones's works on Lemberg, Norman Davies and Roger Moorhouse's research on Wrocław, and Mark Mazower's study of Salonica.⁵¹ In Czernowitz, as in Lviv, Wrocław, Odessa, and Salonica, world wars and the Holocaust swept away the multiethnic character of the population. In all cities, an old imperial order was replaced by a nation state, which was displaced by a totalitarian regime. And in all, the Holocaust, homogenization policies, persecutions, forced expulsions, and

deportations of ethnic groups reshaped the city – its people and culture – irrevocably.

Scholarship on Holocaust memory in Eastern Europe has developed even more recently, primarily in the past decade.⁵² *Ghosts of Home* by Marianne Hirsh and Leo Spitzer is the sole work to date to focus on Czernowitz.⁵³ Combining history and communal memory, the authors show how Czernowitz is remembered in the personal, familial, and cultural spheres.

The Fate of Czernowitz Jews: Genocide and Memory in Bukovina explores inter-ethnic relations, national homogenization, collaboration in genocide, urban history, and historical memory. While other studies of the Holocaust in Ukraine have focused on central regions such as the Zhitomir area and the Ukrainian heartland,⁵⁴ *The Fate of Czernowitz Jews* will scrutinize the periphery, in particular the southwestern, historically partially Romanian, territories. These borderlands provide a window on the complex dynamic that led to mass murder, challenging explanations of ideology, and the role of nationalism, nation-building and antisemitism leading in a linear way to genocide. Perhaps, too, insights gained from this problematization can help us understand not only how the Holocaust developed in this particular region, but may apply to study of inter-ethnic relations in general.

The Fate of Czernowitz Jews focuses on the inhabitants of one borderland city. Confronted with Romanianization during the interwar period, Sovietization during the year of Soviet rule (1940-1941), and the Holocaust during World War II, the Jews of this city faced different structures of persecution and different possibilities for survival than their co-religionists in central regions of occupied Ukraine or Poland. Analyzing the dynamics of interethnic and neighborly relations will elucidate the role and function of multiethnic composition of a borderland in shaping possibilities for collaboration, assistance, cooperation, and rescue.

The Fate of Czernowitz Jews will also scrutinize the role of the Soviet regime: the possibilities it offered Jews for survival and rescue during the war and the postwar history of persecution and repression. Finally, *The Fate of Czernowitz Jews* both draws upon and adds to the rapidly developing field of memory studies, as it analyzes how Jewish neighbors are remembered and how historical memory of the Holocaust was constructed and commemorated in this borderland region.

NOTES

- ¹ The name of the region *Bukovina* is derived from the common Slavic word for a beech tree (*buk*) and is commonly translated into English as 'land of the beech trees'. The name *Bukovina* came into official use in 1775 with the region's annexation by Habsburg Monarchy.
- ² Paul Celan, *Collected Prose* (New York: The Sheep Meadow Press, 1986), p. 34.
- ³ The same city was known as Czernowitz in German, Cernăuți in Romanian, Chernovtsy or Chernovitsy in Russian, Czerniowce in Polish, and Chernivtsi (now part of Ukraine) in Ukrainian. The changes in the composition of population, as well as the geopolitical, cultural, and linguistic developments, and the border shifts within the region over a period of hundreds years, affected toponymy.
- ⁴ Karl Emil Franzos, a famous German novelist, published (1876) a collection of stories, *Aus Halb-Asien, Land and Leute des ostlichen Europas. Kulturbilder* Franzos portrayed a success story of peaceful coexistence in the multiethnic Bukovina under Habsburg rule in this work.
- ⁵ Dobrzhansky O, Kushnir M., et al, *Jevreys'ke naseleennia ta rozvytok jevreys'koho natsional'nogo rukhu na Bukovyni v ostanniy chverti XVIII – pochatku XX st.* (Chernivtsi: Nashi knyhy, 2007), p. 16.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- ⁷ Bukovina was the headquarter of significant Hassidic communities. The dynasty of Rabbi Israel Friedman resided in Sadagora after he fled from Russia in 1842. Hassidic communities in Boyany and Vizhnitsa were followers of Rabbi Mendel Hager of Kosiv.
- ⁸ The Austrian statistics records classified populations primarily according to the language of communication and religion. The category of nationality was not present in Austrian censuses. This caused a problem for the later Romanian and Ukrainian scholars who understood Bukovina's history as a history of one nation.
- ⁹ See, for example, Ukrainian newspaper *Chas* (Time) all issues through January till December, 1936 were censored by Romanian authorities (Derzhavny Archiv Chernivetskoji oblasti (DACHO) library, Ukraine).
- ¹⁰ Leon Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology and Antisemitism: The Case of Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930s* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1991), pp. 6-16.
- ¹¹ Debórah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, *Holocaust: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton&Company, 2002), p.119-121. See more on antisemitism and minority treatment in Romania: Debórah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, *Flight from the Reich: Refugee Jews, 1933-1946* (New York: W.W. Norton&Company, 2009), pp.29, 99, 195-196.
- ¹² Vladimir Solonari, *Purifying the Nation. Population Exchange ad Ethnic Cleansing in Nazi-Allied Romania* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), p. 13.

- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 *Ibid.*, p.140.
- 15 DACHO (Derzhavnyj arkhiv Chernivetskoji oblasti – State archive of Chernivtsi region), f. 5, op.4, spr.59, ark. 1-107.
- 16 DACHO, f. 1, op. 1, spr. 58-59, ark. 10-11; f. 1, op. 1, spr. 27, ark.41; f. 72, op. 1, spr. 2, ark. 33-34; f. 1, op. 1, spr. 4-6, 8-29; f. 4, op. 1, spr. 233, ark. 54; f.4, op.1, spr. 125, ark. 23, 51, 59; f. 1, op. 1, spr. 171, ark. 92-97; f. 4, op.4, op. 1, spr. 233, ark.41.
- 17 Vladimir Solonari, *Purifying the Nation. Population Exchange ad Ethnic Cleansing in Nazi-Allied Romania*, p. 149.
- 18 *Ibid.*
- 19 Dennis Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally: Ion Antonescu and His Regime, Romania, 1940-1944* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 2-3.
- 20 See: Svetlana Frunchak, Commemorating the Future in Post-War Chernivtsi, in *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol.24, no. 3 (Summer 2010), pp. 435-63.
- 21 DACHO, f.1, op.1, spr.58–59, ark.10–11; f.1, op.1, spr.27, ark.41; f.72, op.1, spr.2, ark.33–34; f.1, op.1, spr. 4–6, 8–29; f. 4, op.1, spr. 233, ark.54; f.4, op.1, spr.125, ark.23, 51, 59; f.1, op.1, spr.171, 174, ark.33, 62–77; f.4, op.1, spr.233, ark.54; f.4, op.1, spr.125; f.2, op.1, spr.122b, ark.4–7,9; f.2, op.1, spr.18, ark.7,16; f.2, op.1, spr.17; f.1, op.1, spr.171; f.1, op.1, spr.171, ark.92–97; f.4, op.1, spr.233, ark.41.
- 22 DACHO, f.653, op.1, spr.141, ark. 4-141; f.653, op.1, 104; f.653, op. 1, spr.105a, ark. 12-412; f.653, op.1, spr. 105b; f.653, op.1, spr. 3,4,5,6a,6b,7; f.653, op.1, spr 68, ark. 2-201.
- 23 DACHO, f. AP-2809, op.3, spr.8, ark.127; DACHO, f.653, op.1, spr.103, ark.2-7, 20-26. According to findings of the Soviet Extraordinary Commission, approximately 6 000 Jewish inhabitants were murdered during this three-day pogrom in Czernowitz.
- 24 DACHO, f. P2833, op.1, spr. 45, ark. 1 (Sarah Larina), 5 (Abram Lebitseler), 22 (Nusia Spektoran), 28 (Valentin Aisenfrants), 46 (Marchel Isenger), 50 (Berta Portnoy), 52 (Klara Altman), 56 (Norbert Aurban), 75 (Pinkhas Lutinger), 79 (Roza Linder).
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- 26 In *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1961, 2003.), vol. 2, p. 771, Raul Hilberg estimated that more than 10,000 Jews were murdered in Bukovina and Bessarabia during the summer 1941. Radu Ioanid in *Evreii sub regimul Antonescu* (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1998) adduces 23,513 as the number of murdered Jews in the first weeks of war.
- 27 Dennis Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally*, p. 127.
- 28 Vladimir Solonari, *Purifying the Nation. Population Exchange and Ethnic Cleansing in Nazi-Allied Romania*, pp. 142-184.
- 29 Dennis Deletant, "Aspects of the Ghetto Experience in Eastern Transnistria: the Ghettos and Labor Camp in the Town of Golta," in: *Ghettos 1939-1945 New Research and Perspectives on Definition, Daily Life, and Survival* (USHMM: Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, 2005), pp. 15-67.
- 30 DACHO, f. 307, op. 1, spr. 2954-2960.
- 31 DACHO, f. 307, op. 1, spr. 2248.
- 32 DACHO, f.307, op., spr. 2176 - 2179.
- 33 DACHO, f. R. 307, op. 1, spr. 2141, ark. 26-69; f. 307, op. 1, spr. 2163-2165.
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- 35 DACHO, f. 307, op.
- 36 DACHO, f. 307, op.2. spr.2167, 2168.
- 37 DACHO, f. 307, op. 2, spr. 2728
- 38 DACHO, f.307, op.2, spr. 2726-2727; 2733
- 39 DACHO, f.307, op.1, spr. 107, ark. 1-10; f.307, op.1, spr. 108, ark.1-22; f.307, spr. 109, ark. 1-6; f.307, spr. 110, ark.14; f.307, spr.112, ark.4-48; f.307, spr. 113, ark. 3; f.307, spr.114, ark. 1-12; f.307, ark. 115, ark. 7.
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RUSSIA'S VISION OF THE WIDER BLACK SEA REGION: IMPERIUM, CONDOMINIUM OR SECURITY COMMUNITY?

Introduction

Ever since Russia became a Black Sea power in the eighteenth century, it has positioned itself as an actor striving for domination, if not for outright hegemony in what it perceived as its western 'southern rim'. While the reasons for such identifications have varied over the last three centuries, depending implicitly on the nature of its agency – Hobbesian empire and latter 'affirmative action empire' (Martin 2001) or even an empire¹ with global ideological and hegemonic ambitions (e.g. Soviet Russia) - Russia's has remained constant in rejecting 'outside' interference in the Black Sea. In the Russian view of historical, this area is central to its survival as a state, the natural barrier against invaders and the locus of greatness. The geopolitical and normative regime of the Black Sea has remained one of the most important, knottiest and most acute issues of Russia's foreign policy for more than three centuries. The particular importance of the Black Sea has been defined by Russia's geo-strategic positioning, by great power interests, by defence needs on the Black Sea coast, by in external trade and by the necessity to develop southern European Russian economically. (Nezhinskyi and Ignatiev 1999: 8)

In the view of many students of Russia, the collapse of the USSR signified a rift with the past of Russia's imperial agency. Nonetheless, given how recent was the collapse of 'the last empire' and how strictly centralized and metropolitan its political organization, doubts have been raised as to whether Russia has really become a 'normal country.' The way that Russia formats evidence and facts in the BSR – and generally in the borderland territories around it - may point towards, at the very least, a redefinition by re-evaluating the past." Moreover, the official and public narrative of Russia as an agent in the world still provides enough rhetorical

evidence of preference for a 'neo-empire of sorts,' implying an inclination to organize the territory around Russia on a hierarchical basis, whereby those subject to this framing are to be exposed to non-consensual and often informal control. In this context, regionalization of the WBSR poses a series of problems concerning acceptance by and from Russia, since political regionalism presumes that actors are in a position to construct common identities and pool resources, and that they are inclined to do so. So far, one can scarcely find instances of Russia's becoming part of and promoting any regionalizing inclusive projects. Our assumption is that the main reason for Russia's reluctance for a WBSR project resides in its agency, and the strategic identity which is inherently part of it.

Theoretical and practical underpinnings of the WBSR concept

There should be a continuum of approaches, interpretations or narratives in theoretical interpretation of the Wider Black Sea Region² (WBSR) as a geopolitically or geostrategically novel 'object' constructed or imagined by a plurality of agents - especially in recent decades. Such a contextualization would more appropriately depict the evidence of the multitude of agencies, each with a distinct vision for the WBSR. This is the natural expression of the same plural number of identities and their derivable interests.³

At first glance, such appears to be the regional background of the Wider Black Sea Region, where actors qualify into a wide spectrum of political cultures, regimes and levels of strategic interaction and self-identification, as well as national and trans-national institutions and societies, and/or internal and external regional factors. Thus, starting from Iver Neumann's post-structural reflectivist approach based on regional members' Self/Other cognition of the social environment, a region is what its constituent parts make of it. In other words, understanding the evolution of a region can be summarized to the core question of "whose region is being constructed?" (Neumann 2003), and whether that construction is the result of a singular or plural endeavour, the task of a singular or plural 'whose.' Therefore, the WBSR as the sum of a plurality of political processes, cannot but represent the result of either a certain consensus among its builders - be it normatively formalized, politically negotiated, conventionally tacit, or coercively imposed - in case of a hegemonic builder, *vide* the historical

cases of Byzantium, the Ottoman Empire or the Russian Empire and the USSR.

According to another theoretical, regionalist, post-structural approach on the same theoretical continuum, a region may represent the result of negative security links or interactions⁴ through which participants in the social-political process depend so much, in terms of their security liabilities, on each other that they may form a distinct (sub-) "regional security complex"⁵ (Buzan, 1991; Buzan and Wæver, 2003), see for example the Greater Caucasus as a possible sub-regional conceptualization of the WBSR or Eurasia, or the phenomenon of the so-called "unsolved conflicts" as an element of a tacit negative proto-regionalist design of Russia's "near abroad." Contrary to Neumann's inside-out logic, Buzan's interpretation of regions stems from an outside-in logic and places great power interplay, and their impact on regional insiders, at the centre of regional dynamics. Although this approach does not by far supplant or invalidate the inside-out interpretation, it places centre stage, and on the interplay between upper levels of analysis (regional and global), such analytical elements as geopolitics, geo-strategy and strategic identity in a regionalist foreground. As a rule, these elements are considered part of hard security issues pertaining to the political-military and to a certain degree economic spheres, the latter especially in the context of securitization processes. Thus, the two logics of region formation provide us with two possibilities to perceive the driving forces of an incipient region - such as the WBSR - either a region built through the common vision of its dwellers - a so-called 'consensual regionalism,' or a region built through the lens of a great power game, wherein the region is marked out by the leading powers securing a sphere of influence.

To this end, a shift from the above two identity-based approaches to the WBSR might be necessary, to illustrate the evidence-based foundation of the institutional network of the WBSR. Thus, in this rationalist logic of the region's construction, regionalist development in the WBSR has been fuelled first and foremost, but not exclusively, by liberal institutionalist, transactionalist and functionalist principles of international politics: cooperation and integration. These two principles have proven to be the less costly mechanisms of post Cold War European political order, promoted especially by Western actors - EU, NATO and the USA, and a Western-aspiring one - Turkey.

Yet, this integrative process has not only taken place thanks to efforts by the four actors in a bid to either centralize and tame the *limes*, i.e. the

border areas of Eastern Europe, or to build a platform for cooperation in the arena of low politics (the case of Turkey). Regionalization also took place as the logical expression of at least a minimum of shared identities, values and, respectively, interests and initiatives, promoted by actors which are organically both subject and object of the regional construction. Therefore the epistemic foundation of regional processes in the WBSR, as promoted by the above-mentioned regionalisers, has a hybrid (rationalist and reflectivist) and post-modern nature. It shares and combines liberal and constructivist understanding about the political order (Cooper 2003), and qualifies primarily as the 'new regionalist approach,' but with a caveat about the necessity to integrate into the theoretical framing the *multiplicity* of processes and actors at interplay in the WBSR's social architecture. Thus, the qualifier *pluralist* should be added to the 'new regionalism' approach, and the framing of the region should be not only theoretically and prescriptively driven, but also driven by 'grounded theory.' In this key, a pluralist perspective is necessary to encompass the multitude of the region's security architectures promoted by a given agent.

Agents of Black Sea Regionness

As a part of the same continental integrative process, the WBSR has witnessed a common declared desire for regionness as expressed by the existence of a plurality of (sub-) regional organizations, regionalizing dimensions, initiatives and platforms. Still, every regionalist project has been intimately connected to the strategic value system of each actor concerned and consequently, in a region heavily marked by so many historic discrepancies and strategic overlays, common geo-strategic views have become scarce. Regional insider champions have to a certain extent had positive security expectations from deepening regionalization projects; Romania, intermittently Ukraine (for reasons of inconclusive strategic identity and contradictory strategic culture of the elites, both of which reflect into Ukraine's unstable regional projection), and insulatingly Turkey (implying a strategic preference to limit regionalizing participants exclusively to Black Sea coastal states). Meanwhile however, other potential 'regionalizers' have been either reluctant and marginal participants in some regional projects, or even outspoken critics in others, challenging the very basis of such projects. Thus, for the regional dwellers with an active regionalizing agency – mostly Turkey and

Romania, and much less Ukraine - the WBSR seems about the extension of their security and identity concerns, or as Felix Ciută has termed "transfer of strategic identity"⁶ (Ciută 2008: 139).

For the outsider champions - the United States, NATO and EU - the Black Sea Region is often valued in different terms. For the US the region is more a link in a chain of wider global security concerns (Ciută 2007), whereby a stable WBSR would allow for more geo-strategic flexibility in the Eurasian Balkans. For the EU it is still a liminal area to be potentially and incrementally subjected to soft normative centralization processes (Zielonka 2006), or stabilized through combining a variety of geostrategic models of regionalization (Browning and Joenniemi: 544 – 546); while NATO expects the region to be subject to regional endeavours for macro-stabilization, in a greater Eurasian dynamics supposedly far from being under its coveted exclusive custody, especially in the aftermath of the August 2008 Russo-Georgian War and the American-Russian "strategic reset" and reassessment, contextualized by the global war on terror and nuclear non-proliferation, or even in the frame of CSTO-SCO (Collective Security Treaty Organisation and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) incremental collaboration.

Therefore, the incipient regionalism developing today in the Wider Black Sea Region⁷ ought to be characterized in the following heterogeneous ways: as multidimensional, fragmented, intertwined and contradictory. The need for such disparate qualifiers to characterize the WBSR stems, first, from the different projects that each significant actor, - i.e. each actor capable of initiating, with a certain degree of success, a regionalist project for specific reasons – is trying to develop in the region. Intimately connected to the projects themselves and for path-dependent reasons, each project initiator has a strategically unique mindset, this being a second defining element of the WBSR heterogeneity. Finally, because of the optional backgrounds mentioned above, each region-builder or group of region-builders places special emphasis on certain social aspects – economic, political and/or military – quite likely to the detriment of other aspects, thus further blurring the cohesion of the wider regionalist project. Russian strategic identities, perceptions and interests give rise to one of the main (complexes of) factors constituting the "blocking heterogeneity" of the WBSR. Thus far, by the end of the second decade after Turkey's first attempt at regionalizing through the BSEC, Russia has come to impose itself as the 'gate-keeper' of Black Sea regionness, whether by default or by design.

Russia in the WBSR - neither insider, nor outsider

The most significant actor left in the regional dimension, represented as the Other potential builder of a regional project, is Russia. It places itself at the other end of the strategic spectrum, and is mainly a traditionalist and realist-Hobbesian⁸ observer of and participant in the geopolitics of the WBSR. In this context, the West's central paradigms of regionalism building, such as neo-liberalism (functionalism, institutionalism or transactionalism) and constructivism, are difficult to apply prescriptively when considering Russia as a would-be regional policy-maker. Russia's strategic culture of *realpolitik* is the first reason to consider in this respect. It would, however, be simplistic to call this merely realism-driven. In organic relation to this stands Russia's post-imperial syndrome, reflected in its anxiety about leaving the imagined glorious past of the Yalta-Potsdam continental arrangements and switching to a new post-modern 'mode' of security building, eloquently represented by the philosophy of 'new regionalism' and a post Cold War western drive for commonality of objectives, goals, strategies and pluralism. As a consequence, the mutual zero-sum perceptions of the regional and extra-regional actors towards Russia tend to be self-reinforcing.

Thence, the compelling questions on the Russian factor in the WBSR ought to be as follows: What is Russia's perception of the Wider Black Sea Region security *problematique*?⁹ How does this perception influence the evolution of the concept and its implementation through concrete, regional, formal and informal projects? What design does Russia have, if any, for the WBSR? What mechanisms does it employ to ensure that its interests are and will be implemented? What impact do the design, interest and mechanisms of Russia's foreign and security policy have on regional states and outsider regional actors? What can the way ahead be for Russia and the region?

Paradoxical as it may seem, Russia's special case presents a not insignificant challenge, since it can be considered neither an insider nor an outsider to the WBSR due to a number of relational-subjective reasons. First, for a majority of both insiders and outsiders, Russia is perceived as the 'Other' in contrast to which different regionalist projects are envisaged. Thence, the 'othering' perception by regional actors assesses Russia within a broad range of security categorizations; enemy for Georgia, 'sovereign obstructionist' for Ukraine and Moldova, testy interlocutor for Romania and Bulgaria, or competitor and spoiler for EU, NATO and the

U.S. Second, the importance of the Wider Black Sea Region to Russia can also be judged by the fact that it has waged no fewer than three wars in the last 15 years (two in Chechnya – Russia's internal 'Other' - and one with Georgia) and has been both a covert and overt sponsor of three other conflicts, in order to assure its perceived vital internal and external interests, as defined by the elites.

In addition, the WBSR is home to what Russia calls the "problems of the South"¹⁰ or "the southern rim" (Pryzel 1998: 280 – 288), i.e. the most sensitive spheres (territorial integrity, porous borders, ethnic struggles, demographics, ecology) of Russia's survival and strategic posture as a great power. Third, continuing the 'regional issues catalogue,' Russia is a central player, if not outright sponsor as well, in some of the most intractable political-military and social phenomena – the "frozen/unsolved conflicts." Finally, Russia is the WBSR's main protagonist in one of the most securitized 'great games' for energy transportation on the Eurasian continent.

Symptomatically, the WBSR is that region, comprising both vast territories of Russia and a great number of neighbouring states, where Russia's still evolving post-USSR strategic identity strives to define itself through (sub-)regional institutions and arrangements, whether through opposition to these (NATO, EU, OSCE, GUAM-ODED, CFET) by means thereof (CIS, CSTO, SCO, EAEC) or selectively (BSEC, BLACKSEAFOR Group and BS Forum). Therefore, together with Russia's WBSR 'southern underbelly,' the *problematique* of the new European security architecture building and power projection emplacement should be considered an important link in the wider global positioning of Russia as a sovereign and legitimate member among the major powers of international politics, as well as for its own society at large.

Finally, the concept of strategic "overlay"¹¹ has a strong position in Russia's regional perceptions. Both Russian decision-makers and outside experts acknowledge that the bulk of the current issues in the BSR are regional projections of fundamental differences in Russia's relations with its major Western interlocutors (Alexandrova-Arbatova 2008, 2009). This explains why all EU, NATO and US activities in the WBSR stimulate geopolitical rivalries. Furthermore, as *the* area where so much is at stake, including Ukraine's position towards the West and Russia as well as that of the South Caucasian states, Moscow views the WBSR concept as an alien and potentially hostile project, that if successful could downgrade it from the status of a great power to that of a regional power, casting it

back to a status comparable to seventeenth-century Russia. Moreover, a successful implementation of a WBSR *à la Euro-atlantique* would jeopardize Russia's own version of Europe, a non-Western one (the CIS project(s)), and would mean a failure for its present costly model of development, based on an autocratic political regime and rentier elite, an exclusivist status in a post-Soviet environment "with limited sovereignty" and subject to "Russian internal policy" (Shevtsova 2007: 188). For these reasons, Russia's behaviour cannot be arranged in any tidy matrix of Western regional projects; this is due to Russia's agency, and the strategic identity stemming from it. In the next section I will substantiate the ideas set out above.

Russian pervasive perceptions and their impact on region-building

Buzan and Wæver's seminal work on regional security complexes (RSCs) characterizes Russia's standing in the Russian security complex (whether we call this the post-Soviet realm or the CIS) as having a predilection and informal preference for "manageable instability," or as the "guarantor of an inconclusive status quo" (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 420) within and for its "sphere of privileged interests" (Medvedev 2008) - as the official narrative postulates. Besides reflecting its own unsettling strategic experience as a post-imperial state, still swinging between a crypto-imperial and post-imperial condition, this instability has usually been performed with the help of a number of already well-tested foreign and security policy tools in the two decades of Russia's post-Cold War existence, creating a complex formal and informal governance structure on the territories of the former empire exerted by virtue of the highly uneven power ratio in the area (Birgersson 2002, 24). Among the most resonant policy approaches should be numbered 1) the repudiation of continental defence arrangements, 2) (at least partial) sponsorship of "frozen" and dormant conflicts, 3) the quest for symbolic hard power projection through the positioning of military bases, 4) the securitization of energy contracts or rerouting of pipeline projects, 5) the politicization of economic issues, 6) foreign policy instrumentalization of the Russian diaspora and, 7) a tool-kit of various soft power instruments. A summary listing of policies used in bilateral and multilateral relations with regional actors allows us to conclude that few regional and extra-regional actors were spared the

proverbial “Russian special treatment,” based on elements of coercion and all sorts of conflict-mongering.

Makarychev (2009)¹², writing about Russia’s perceptions of the region, identifies Buzan and Wæver’s RSC theory as the best corresponding starting point from which to problematize Russia’s perception about the BSR, and notes that

“[t]he point is that countries forming RSC may not be able to construct their particular identities without resorting to constant references to other countries belonging to the same RSC. This process of mutual constructing of identities is by no means free from controversies and conflicts; what is important is that there is no way to describe the Russian identity without, say, pointing to such emblematic regions as Crimea in general and Sebastopol in particular”.

Furthermore, the BSR¹³ in Russia’s perception is either an in-between “pre-subcomplex” formed by bilateralism, not yet capable of wide cross-linkage and having a rather prescriptive character, or could be perceived as an “insulating mini-complex” at the crossroad of two competing RSCs – the EU RSC and the Russian RSC (the post-Soviet area except for the three Baltic States). (Makarychev 2009: 65 – 66) In this Russian view, the WBSR is a scarcely distinguishable sub-region of the CIS, and its constituent components are the post-Soviet Black Sea states.

This *status quo* of “fuzzy borders” is caused by a range of perceptions resulting naturally from Russia’s definitions of this wider post-Soviet area, reflected in terms of security and strategic importance, and which Makarychev (2009) calls an ambiguity of the “contours and shapes of *Russian spatial order*” [italics mine]. As a logical step, given how Buzan and Wæver’s theory identifies Russia’s regional perceptions, the same author argues that Russia contours its “spatial order” through securitization/de-securitization processes. Thus, he identifies five securitized ‘dossiers’: 1) Russia’s place and acceptance in international society as a normal power; 2) NATO enlargement, with a strong component constituted by the geopolitical status of Ukraine; 3) border-related issues; 4) identity-related issues; and 5) ‘alleged encroachments on economic issues’ (Makarychev 2009: 66 – 68).

Although I concur with Makarychev’s cogent argumentation based on the RSC theory and securitization processes, as well as with the identification of the ‘dossiers,’ I consider that first, the list is a little too

short; given the RSC security externalities, it comprises geo-economical processes in the Central Asian states. Second, the geo-political area concerned is too restricted, especially as concerns the restless North and South Caucasus region, which has become a quasi-RSC within the WBSR because of its high social-military volatility and its capacity to act as an incentive to securitize a number of hard and soft security issues. Moreover, historical or traditional Russian perceptions, and their impact on the present geopolitical projections do have a say in reading Moscow's WBSR strategy. Or else, reflecting its self-perception as a 'hegemonic' regionalist in a multipolar world order, Russia seems inclined to see the WBSR as an intermediate link in the chain of three marine regions: Caspian Sea - Black Sea - Mediterranean Sea (admittedly in opposition to some Western views, which favour blending into one strategic area the Baltic Sea – Black Sea – Caspian Sea); this is also linked to the tendency to identify regions around seas as bearers of sub-regions, correspondingly: Central-Asia – the Middle East – South Caucasus – the Balkans (Arbatova 2009: 289). These are sub-regions where Russia normally has big stakes and, but for the latter, semi-exclusive interests.

Russian neo-imperial ambitions: nothing new under the sun

As mentioned before, on the opposite strategic track, starting from the turn of the century, the Euro-Atlantic integration shaped by consecutive waves of eastward enlargement by two major Western continental actors – EU and NATO – favoured the conceptualization of the Wider Black Sea Region as the next shore on which to extend the region of stability and collective security on the greater European continent. In the long run, this endeavour was supposed to have the automatic political impact of galvanizing support in the Black Sea regional states, with a view to completing the project of a true, politically united, post-Westphalian and post-modern Europe based on a similarity of values, interests and objectives. Besides EU's *acquis communautaire* and Copenhagen criteria, and NATO's instruments for integration and cooperation - IPAP, Intensified Dialogue and MAP - that were to result in the mega-project of Euro-Atlantic enlargement and European political cohesion, Western actors envisaged and included the WBSR through the prism of institutionally specific tools and arrangements to tackle various regional and extra-regional problems¹⁴. Thus, the (conventionally called) West empowered a potential shift from

the Russian Security Complex to an embryonic Black Sea Security Complex including Russia *inter alia*, an area most probably characterized by a security community value system and inspired by “geopolitical pluralism” (Brzezinski 1997, Kuzio 2000a, 2000b), with multiple cores and benign interactions within and among them, and backed by a larger Euro-Atlantic community.

This strategy - and generally speaking, any Western strategy - included and still includes, Russia as a traditional game maker on the greater regional chessboard and as the main contender in a perceived ‘critical region’ of its own. (Oliker *et al* 2009: 93 – 94) Russia’s conduct is rooted in a number of historically pervasive foreign security policy constants that have constituted and driven its essence as an imperial entity. (Legvold 2007) These constants can briefly be enumerated as: 1) the perception of losing its grip on border areas, internalized as its exclusive sphere of influence and interest; 2) apprehension about lessening economic fortunes, mainly (but not exclusively) related nowadays to the new energy corridors that are developing parallel to or against Russia’s interests; 3) its territoriality instinct, which can be read through the lens of a loose (neo-) imperial design, on a hub and spoke model, a hyper-centralized governance system, and driven mainly by fear of fragmentation and its geography of borderlessness; and 4) Russia’s identity quest and its great power place in an emerging multipolar world. (Rieber 2007: 204 – 278; Graham 2009: 56 – 57) All these pervasive perceptions have permanently fed into the Russian elite’s narrative of vulnerability, insecurity and fear of collapse. Moreover, in their interpretation of a thousand years of Russian history, the elites reckon that “only with the rise of an imperial Russian state was Russia able to defend itself from invaders” (Birgersson 2002: 61-62). Thus, the imperial past left indelible marks on Russian strategic identity and perceived national interests expressed through status exceptionalism in the former Soviet states.

These perceptions have also been expressed through a number of myths or well-entrenched foreign policy clichés¹⁵ having a deep hold on Russian elites and the national psyche, such as “besieged fortress,” “encirclement,” “enemy at the gate ... we are left alone, there is no one but us ... rally around the flag,” “vital sphere for survival,” “losing our grip on the borderlands” and a more informal “coveted target for a juicy piece of land,” see for instance Putin’s narrative in the immediate aftermath of the Beslan tragedy (2004)¹⁶ or the already trite “the collapse of the Soviet Union was the biggest geopolitical disaster of the century” (Putin 2005).¹⁷ Along these lines, it seems that the crux of Russia’s strategic identity lies in how the elites constantly tackle the question of Russia’s glorious

imperial past through policies that aim to impose a specific and unique interpretation of history in the post-Soviet states – evoking the centrality of Russia's victimhood on the path to world peace, but also great power and superpower status – and thereby seek legitimization through this narrative (Birgersson 2002, 47).

Thus, one way to grasp Russia's stance towards numerous projects in the WBSR is to explain it by pervasive perceptions shaping its foreign security policies. Historically, by which we mean over the last four centuries, these perceptions and factors were the main drivers for Russia's instinctual imperial approach towards the world around. For reasons of geography, size, power, demographics, foreign security policy culture and/or identity, Russia has been paradoxically both an exception and an eloquent expression of the WBSR security *problematique*. Nonetheless, it does not easily fit into any of the groups of actors described above, shaped by a liberal and constructivist interpretation of the regional order. Thus, Russia's regional uniqueness stems from its specific foreign security policy perceptions and its historically specific self-positioning not only in the wider Black Sea regional context, but also and especially on the wider global scene, from which it legitimizes a significant part of its regional positioning.

Manifestations of Russian regional designs in WBSR

Ever since becoming a European power and *de jure* empire in the eighteenth century and even before, Russia's strategic identity and culture identified the West as its significant Other. (Neumann 1996; Pryzel 1998: 270 – 280) It placed Europe, and much later the USA at the top of its offensive and defensive concerns through which it established strategic goals and imagined imperial national identities in practically all areas of its existence as a state and society. (Hosking 2001) Although the demise of the Soviet Union two decades ago supposedly brought Russia to post-imperial development as a state, the many centuries of imperial heritage have not still waned, and systematically re-emerge in the normative, strategic and identity debates on Russia's place in the world. Moreover, the 18 years since the demise of the USSR – the last quasi-absolute master of the Black Sea – are too short a span to allow for an interpretation of Russia as completely healed from the "imperial virus," as a polity with a post-imperial worldview (Sherr 2009) based on an equal-to-equal treatment for its erstwhile 'imperial subjects.' The neo-imperial strand in

Russia's politics towards the Black Sea results also from "Russia's identity construction, which is derived precisely from a glorification (rather than repudiation) of its history." (Makarychev 2008: 10)

Yet, we do not imply that Russia's self-perception through the 'splendid imperial past' as the founding myth has not changed at all. The magnitude and consequences of the 1991 collapse of the USSR have been immense and most probably irreversible. What we do affirm is that the elite 'collective consciousness' is still haunted by what can be qualified as "empire lite"¹⁸ or "neo-imperial" identity. The projections of this mindset or identity are substantiated by policies and events that take place on a vast territory from Central Asia to the Baltic Sea. These policies range from soft (peacekeeping) and hard military intervention to economic coercion and soft power ambitions. Therefore, any 'alien' (read Western) project – such as Western-backed Black Sea initiatives – that attempts to attract post-Soviet territory in security arrangements would be met in Moscow with deep suspicion at best and outright hostility at worse, as posing increased danger to Russia's control over its perceived boundaries.

Nevertheless, by the end of the second decade of post-imperial existence, developments within the post-Soviet realm and close to its borders, under the guise of a number of regionalist dimensions, influenced the practical regionalist policy approach on the Russian foreign policy agenda. It brought regionalism closer to acceptance, especially in areas of direct geographic contact with the EU and with an emphasis on the "new regionalist" approaches due to the relative "safety" of the issues usually considered in this context: cross-border economic and social cooperation, education, health, ecology and other matters of low politics. The most eloquent example of Russian involvement through the "new regionalism approaches" is represented by the Northern Dimension *problématique*, considered an important political tool by virtue of endowing Russia with equality in partnership, obtaining inside access to EU politics and establishing a counterweight to other regionalist projects in the post-Soviet area (Smith 2008: 22). As a regionalizing approach, it proved less successful and showed its limits when it reached the prickly issues of access by the EU to the Kaliningrad exclave through direct contact with the local authorities and society (NGO level) and not through the federal authorities (Makarychev 2004). Also, it met the same fate in the highly sensitive sphere of energy cooperation, *vide* also the Arctic Dimension, which although a similar moderate success replicating the Northern Dimension and containing almost the same actors, presented a lesser degree of application of "new

regionalism approaches,” two important reasons being US presence in the regional format and the liminal character of the area concerned (Howard 2010). Consequently, it is hard not to notice that power politics dominate Russia’s narrative, even in low-politics regional projects.

Drawing a brief parallel with Russia’s stance on similar regionalist projects described above gives us more insights on how Russia understands its involvement in such projects. Notwithstanding obvious benefits, such projects have not persuaded Russia to consider them the only or main option for its strategic concerns, of which the most important are *great power status, sovereignty, multilateralism and multipolarity*, by which it implies, among others, the possibility of its own development as a peaceful alternative to Western political models. Thus, an alternative design comprises the “privileged sphere of influence,” where the WBSR is on the front line of a more than symbolic strategic identity battle.

As mentioned above, the Russian historical impulse to empire has been always a constant in the mind both of its elites and of those in the West or elsewhere seeking to assess the former’s strategic vectors (Legvold, 2007; Davisha, 1998; Hosking, 1995; Pipes, 1994). The ideology envisaged by the Russian elites is contrary to building a Black Sea region taking after a Western scenario, as for example the Baltic case. Russian regionalism in the Black Sea Region is based on hegemonic and/or cluster-oriented regionalization and highly fixed on post-Soviet ‘candidates’ to the WBSR project. As one Kremlin spin doctor has symptomatically noted,

Russia -- and I’m talking about the majority of the population and most representatives of the political class -- *wants to be a nation-state, but with an imperial culture, imperial breadth, an imperial style.* [italic added] I don’t know of any significant group in Russia that would like to create a real empire and would be ready to pay for that or to risk for that. Certainly they wouldn’t risk themselves. There are no groups like that. But they all want some sort of space, imperial space within the country.

1) At the level of normative discourse expressing Russia’s great power identity, one of the most eloquent expressions of this understanding of the political order is reflected by security documents. Although no Russian Federation foreign security policy documents in the last decade¹⁹ mention the Black Sea Region as a region of deliberate concern (except for a secondary one, the Naval Doctrine of the Russian Federation until 2020), the sheer evidence of the complexity of issues pertaining to

Russia's interests and relationship with the West and Russia's positioning in the world is manifest in this area. Essentially, the security documents emphasize a multipolar world, without unilateral domination, such as the putative US hegemony. Second, normative projects mention Russia's desire to cooperate and maintain friendly relations with the West, identifying it as the main source of Russia's modernization. Third, all security schemes underline protection of Russians abroad as a policy priority. Fourth, all documents assert that Russia has privileged interests in certain regions, i.e. the post-Soviet realm (de Haas 2010). Among the additional policy priorities, the leitmotif of Russia's official foreign security policy is Russia's strength-based posture, capable of influencing international developments and rejecting Western security programmes, such as the existing Euro-Atlantic security architecture. Ultimately, special emphasis is placed on military-security management of the strategic affairs of state, whereby the state should be able to resist the threat of Western "expansion" (read also encirclement); the state should also be able to resist the threat of Western "expansion" (Gomart 2010: 13 – 14). In this context of a territorially-centred rationale, the positioning of Russian bases in the WBSR is of primary interest. Russia has ensured its privileged military presence *de jure* in Ukraine (Crimea) and Armenia, and *de facto* in Moldova and Georgia, for at least the next four decades. Thus, the WBSR is easily identifiable as the springboard for Russia's global role.

2) The WBSR is for obvious reasons the springboard of Russia's global concerns as an energy superpower. In this respect the region has a unique geo-economic value. Notoriously, the National Security Strategy (2009) quasi-openly declares that Russia considers energy resources a tool of leverage over other states (de Haas 2010: 160), while diversifying energy pipelines and supply markets is a fundamental tenet of Moscow's foreign policy (Putin 2008). Together with the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea is the pillar of Russia's energy offensive towards the most lucrative European markets, while at the same time it is the battlefield on which to isolate the energy-rich Central Asian states in transit dependency on Russia, and to anchor Ukraine and Belarus in its economic space. In the bitter competition for pipeline projects that would arrange for a maximum or exclusive role for Russia (South Stream, Burgas-Alexandropolis), the stakes are not only in maximizing profits, but also in maximizing the extent to which 'avoided' states (Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus) are dependent on the "regional sovereign." Thus, any presumed success of such projects as Nabucco or Odessa-Brody is a highly securitized issue in the corridors of

power in Kremlin. Aside from this, a Western success along the lines of Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum, would reveal the real value of the WBSR, by opening the Central Asian states to a genuine West-East dialogue on energy and infrastructure mega-projects. As a long-term consequence, this would open the strategic options to regional leaders like Uzbekistan, creating the premises for other post-Soviet Central Asian states to constitute a supplementary pillar for a wider regional security community, much to Russia's dismay.

3) A crucial element to 'Russian regionalism' resides in one of the most important principles of Russian foreign policy – the multipolar world. According to this narrative, as applied at the great powers level – the best expression being the UN Security Council, G8, G20 and BRIC – the multipolar world consists of 'each pole's world' where the custodian of the pole has sovereign rights, responsibilities and privileges. Translated into 'Russian,' that certainly means applying the unofficial 'doctrine of limited sovereignty' to post-Soviet states, as well as quite likely legitimizing this set of policies through Medvedev's 'new security architecture' proposals for the West as a medium to long term 'pan-European' project. Hence, among the most evident restrictions to sovereignty there could be numbered:

- *Foreign security policy coordination* under the aegis of CSTO, or neutral status vis-à-vis NATO, and assured exclusive Russian military presence for long periods of time.
- Acquiescing to *Russia's exceptional status* as a peace-maker, peace-builder and peace-enforcer. Discouraging other specialized institutions from becoming involved, e.g. UN, EU, OSCE.
- *A breach in neutral status should be punished* by fomenting secession and irredentism, the most eloquent examples being represented by the 'fulfilled' aspiration of Abkhazia and South Osetia, by quasi-dormant Transnistria or the latent 'Crimean question.'
- The *great power recognition game* expressed through the commonality of identity, culture and civilization. This soft power 'basket' implies that there is a privileged area for political, social and humanitarian rights to for the Russian diaspora or 'compatriots.' It includes privileged status for the Russian language, education for ethnic Russians in their mother-tongue, unrestricted activity of the Russian Orthodox Church and a privileged status for the Russian media. Last but not least, any 'symbolic infringement' on the historic probity of the Soviet legacy of liberation and Russia's civilizing

mission is punishable by means ranging, for instance, from economic sanctions to cyber attacks and sponsored street violence.

Admittedly, the Russian elites consider that the *post-Soviet* world has been an accident for idiosyncratic reasons and that “it did not lose in the Cold War” (Karaganov 2009). Quite the contrary, it interprets the retrenchment of the 1990s as caused by weakness in Yeltsin’s Russia and the West’s wish to break promises through NATO’s ‘Eastern creep’ (Kramer 2009). Therefore, it craves a partial return to the ‘golden age’ of a ‘*pax Sovietica* redux,’ assuring a stable and secure geopolitical external environment. In this logic, the ‘multipolar world’ rhetoric is rather a means to an end, to underpin the re-creation of Russia’s own security ‘orbit.’ In this respect, it regards the WBSR project as a counter-project, intended to marginalize its security concerns and impose a western governance style involving agents at different levels of social interaction on the greater regional scale, evidently involving Russia as well.

Hence, mainly as a pole of regional attraction (but not of construction in the meaning given to regionalism as a *Black Sea Region security community*) the Russian Federation potentially has a binary impact, whether by default or by design. It can slow down region-building by means of conflict sponsoring and the political-criminal nexus (e.g. in Transnistria and South Ossetia) that permeates the sponsorship of the region’s *de facto* states, by means of military bases and *divide et impera* politics, which is the dominating present stance; or it can act as a catalyst for its own informal sub-region-building strategy by means of soft power policies *à la russe*, i.e. influence through a combination of situational experiences and processes, and historical-political aspects inherited by the political elites of the post-Soviet Black Sea, all of which converge in policies of business, energy, historical narrative and societal factors²⁰, media, culture and intelligence (Wilson and Popescu, 2009). To these can be added the capacity in post-Soviet elites and societies to “self-colonize,” by which we mean the latters’ (identity-based) preference for the system of values that Russia is trying to construct as an alternative to the European one, see the eloquent case of Yanukovitch’s Ukraine or Voronin’s Moldova and their soft *sovereign democracy* mimesis. Thus, Russia’s regionalist ambitions are not only a one-way street; they are also a contest of deliberate choices, by virtue of its strong cultural attraction among some segments of post-Soviet societies and elites. It can thus potentially contribute to the continuation of old imperial patterns of standard creation, both formal and informal, by the would-be metropole.

Regional inconclusiveness

Although the Five-Day Russo-Georgian War seems to have been a “little war that shook the world” (Asmus, 2009), our assumption is that on the regional level it changed the order by adding uncertainty to the *status quo ante*, making many experts ask whether the perception of Russia’s increased military, political and economic clout in the Black Sea post-Soviet area pushed the order closer and/or back to a (neo-)imperial design, a condominium (with Turkey), or toward the security community so loosely envisaged by the Euro-Atlantic community. Whatever the perception might be, Russia remains the central piece of the Great Game, while fanning the flames of uncertainty by abstaining from any official and/or normative projections towards the region through recognition of the region as a coherent and conceptualized Wider Black Sea Region and/or as a proto-security community with a distinct identity.

In the aftermath of the Russo-Georgian War of August 2008, it became common wisdom to reckon that incipient regionalist projects in the WBSR have reached a plateau (BSEC), with some even prone to decline and obsolescence (GUAM-ODED, CDC, BS Forum). Almost two decades after the demise of USSR, the contemporary debate around the WBSR as a legitimate unit of political interpretation, and horizontal organization of the social space, is intimately linked to the future of politics in Eurasia, which harks back again and again to the so-called ‘Russian Question.’ The essence of this question resides in the West’s interpretation of Russia as a major source of strategic uncertainty, risk and threat for the European continent. Uncertainty is also caused by a unique view of the paradigm shift in the European triad EU-Russia-US and the fate of their mutual strategic overlay, first and foremost the Ukraine, whereby many Russian decision-makers do not shy away from denying the latter the right to sovereign existence. (Lourie 2008)

Furthermore, Russia’s present view of a ‘transition period’ in international relations puts constraints on any regional political-strategic construction involving it as an active participant. Rather it sees itself as a promoter of its region in the dialogue taking place on the global scale – “communication ... mainly through G8 and new formats such as G20” (Medvedev 2009) - on issues such as post-crisis economic recovery and low-politics. This speaks more about conclusive tactics and less about strategy. In all likelihood, Russia has mostly been inclined to choose “strategic loneliness” based on its nuclear, energy and geographic potential

in its sphere of 'privileged interests.' As a result, any strategic dialogue involving a regionalization of the WBSR with Russia as a willing partner on the geo-strategic level seems to result in failure.

Conclusions:

what kind of Russian regionalism in the WBSR, if any?

The WBSR can be seen as a testing ground for a number of dominant contemporary developmental trends, all affecting Russia and consequently counting it among the main protagonists: *globalization*, *regionalization*, *integration* and *soft re-imperialization*. Whether or not in the context of the present 'strategic reset' with the U.S., the potential neo-imperial strategy is always an option to the Russian elites. It is a potential and partly 'an objective Russian reality' for the following reasons:

- Russia's identities and pervasive perceptions about its standing on the geo-strategic map as a great power on the Eurasian continent.
- Russia's 'fibre' as an agent, i.e. a traditional, conservative and autocratic state.
- Russia's rising military conventional deterrent in the region.
- the internal political divisiveness of post-Soviet states' regimes and societies.
- a conflict-ridden geo-political dynamic in the region, at Russia's discretion and by its sponsorship.
- the shift of global priorities towards other regions (the Greater Middle East) and priorities (economic crisis).
- disengagement by powerful Western region-builders.
- the difference in perception about the regional *what*, *who*, and *why*; about commitment, reflected in the willingness to prioritize the region's *problematique*; and about the scale of the WBSR, by Russia and the Western region-builders. To the former it is part of 'vital interests,' to the latter it is still a remote *limes*.

The WBSR is in considerable part what Russia makes of it. On the one hand, Russia has not accepted the political label *WBSR* as legitimate, for evident reasons of perception and vision. On the other hand, Russia is by now very far from being able to impose a hegemonic discourse exclusively, through labels – the 'near abroad,' 'privileged sphere of

interests,' *Pax Medvedica* or "*suveranizatsyia* [sovereign-ization] Rossii" (Pavlovskiy 2010b) - labels pertaining directly or indirectly to the region (cf. indeed the European Neighbourhood Policy, Eastern Partnership, Black Sea Synergy). Consequently, it gradually creates the playground for 'great bargains' that the Russian decision makers are trying to promote in their relationship with global players.

Moreover, the present Black Sea regional order points to a structural and strategic uncertainty. An inconclusive *status quo* says less about strategy, but quite a lot about tactics and Russia's pragmatic, gradualist and bilateral approach in tackling the region's security. *De-securitization* of the WBSR *problematique* is next to impossible to attain, since the frozen conflicts remain among the main tools of region building *à la russe*. As became evident in the aftermath of the Russo-Georgian 'little war', Russia is prone to act as a 'conclusive security de-stabilizer' just enough to be able to disturb any Western project implementation and re-make the *status quo ante*. Hence, its relative regional military and economic strength qualify it as a regional gatekeeper vis-à-vis any other western regionalizing project. The 'Turkish factor' is also an important pillar contributing to this inconclusiveness by Turkey's reluctance to accept any consistent long-term Western military post in the Black Sea. Ultimately, Russia's preference for dealing with the 'big players,' in order to question the legitimacy of any regional insiders on the regional scale dooms to insignificance any initiatives from such small to medium powers as Romania or the Ukraine.

The uncertainty surrounding Russia's regional standing has an enormous bargaining potential for Kremlin. Admittedly, it serves Russia's interests for reasons of unfinished internal re-construction of its great power status. It is expected that Russia will become expert in 'unfulfilled/unfinished regional contracts' in the foreseeable future (Karaganov 2010). The reasons range from incomplete modernization, going through undefined strategic identity and 'civilizational choice' – what is its place in the world, and what kind of actor should Russia be? - to the unsettled 'great bilateral dossier' on NATO's advance into post-Soviet territory. Besides, a coherent, regionally oriented BSR policy as envisaged by the other region-builders would contradict Russia's 'infatuation' with strategic autonomy, because a genuine regional proclivity is organically based on some sort of pooling, which totally contradicts Russian state and elites mindsets, interests and priorities, and the preference for 'strategic loneliness.'

NOTES

- ¹ Throughout this paper the term ‘empire,’ and its derivatives, will not be used in a delegitimizing or pejorative key. I am interested in ‘empire’ as a hierarchical structure of organizing space or as a way of establishing political order often, but not exclusively, resembling a hub and spoke mechanism. Mark Beissinger (2005) ponders the concept of empire when discussing post-Soviet Russia and states that “[...] according to the formal, legal underpinnings of the contemporary state system, empires are not supposed to exist anymore. They are part of history, supposedly eliminated during the first six decades of the twentieth century and universally replaced by [...] the nation-state” (p. 14). However, the same author writes in relation to the “fundamental issues of empire” that “the vast majority of historians have approached these issues trans-historically – by which I mean that they assert the fundamental similarity between the Soviet Union and traditional empires. [...] The problem with this kind of transhistorical thinking is not that one cannot find parallels across the centuries and millennia and across these political units at a high level of abstraction. Empires have cores and peripheries. But then again, so do contemporary states. Empires exercise sovereign control over peoples who consider themselves distinct political societies. But again, this is true of many modern multinational states as well”. Furthermore, a neo-empire still may be discerned in Beissinger’s conceptualization whereby he states that “Empires in the contemporary world are not just relationships of control of one political society over another; they are, rather, *illegitimate* relationships of control specifically by one *national* political society over another. Thus, embedded within our contemporary understanding of empires are a politics of *national* identity and a politics of *claims-making* [...].” For more see Beissinger 2005, ‘Rethinking Empire in the Wake of Soviet Collapse’, in Barany Z. and Moser Robert G. (ed.) *Ethnic Politics after Communism*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
- ² I identify the Black Sea Region in its **wider** delineation, whereby those agents are considered Black Sea regional that, for reasons of geography and/or security interplay, are clustered in the Black Sea Region through their presence in a number of regional initiatives, projects and institutions. These are: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine. The addition of the ‘wider’ qualifier has become an accepted form of conceptualizing the region, especially in the context of western efforts to bring embattled Black Sea neighbours closer to a security community logics of reasoning international relations.
- ³ See for example Ted Hopf, who states that “Interests should be derivable from identity in the sense that an individual’s identity implies his interests. This relationship should furnish a non-tautological understanding of the

- origins of an interest that is endogenous to the more general theoretical account of identity and interest in another state.” For more see Hopf, T. 2002. *Social Construction of International Politics. Identities and Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 16 – 20.
- 4 Buzan, while defining regional security, terms these “a durable ... amity and enmity patterns among states”. For more see Buzan, B. 1991. *People, States and Fear. An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 191 – 193.
- 5 A security complex was initially defined as “a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another”, Buzan, B. 1983. *People, States and Fear*, Brighton: Wheatsheaf, 106. In the course of his research with Ole Wæver at the Copenhagen School in IR, the definition of RSC was attuned to the new evolving characteristics of the post-Cold War, post-structuralist and post-state centric security architecture. Thus, a RSC has been defined as “a set of units whose major processes of securitization, desecuritization, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another”. See Buzan, B. and Wæver O. 2003. *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 43 – 45.
- 6 It should be mentioned that Felix Ciută’s syntagm was used in a context referring only to Romania. I consider that this logic can be extended regionally at least to Turkey as well; although in the latter’s case the basic strategic identity mechanism is the same, the givens are different for reasons of the same (unique) strategic identity and path dependence. Turkey as a regionalist actor has a wider spectrum of options in its strategic discourse, especially from the beginning of the 2000s with the advent of AKP as a ruling party, while in the Romanian case the regionalizing options are more limited to a few BSR partners, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, to intra-NATO collaboration, and in the Black Sea proper involving low-politics issues.
- 7 Region and regionalism as political narrative are hard to define and contour in a heavily “parted region” (Ciută 2007) like the BS, but because they can be more easily postulated and prescribed, we consider that term ‘wider region’ is more appropriate here as a comprehensive construct. Given the incipient degree of ‘regionality’ in the BS the term ‘wider region’ is in our opinion easier to problematize, especially when including Russia. The boundaries of the region are still difficult to contour because of the same contradiction between various projects and region-builders. Presently, the term ‘region’ is easier to use if we speak of concrete economic regional arrangements, while in case of (geo-)political and strategic approaches/interpretations the term ‘wider region’ is considerably more appropriate for reasons of inclusiveness. Also, the energy aspect creates the premises for Black Sea

states to participate in organically related projects around the Caspian Sea, making them de facto Caspian states, and vice versa for Caspian states to become Black Sea states. Therefore, by using the term 'wider region' we contour a more inclusive concept for a larger *problematique* with a great number of actors.

- 8 Angela Stent (2008: 2) quotes Bobo Lo, stating that "the Russian world view has been described as 'a Hobbesian understanding of the world as an essentially hostile and "anarchic" place; the fear of encirclement by outside forces; and a strategic culture dominated by the geopolitical triad of zero-sum calculus, the balance of power and spheres of influence' (Lo, B. 2006, *Evolution or Regression? Russian Foreign Policy in Putin's Second Term*, in Blakkisrud, H. (ed.), *Towards a Post-Putin Russia*, Oslo, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 63. Also emblematically, Strobe Talbott (2009), referring to the "dangerous Leviathan" or "Russian version of Hobbesianism" after Medvedev's threat to deploy ballistic missiles targeted at Poland, summarized Russian worldview "to two pronouns: "who—whom." That is, "Who will prevail over whom?"
- 9 By *problematique*, I mean a non-positivist theoretical or ideological framework, the production of which conveys a value judgment on what is relevant in the world around. By *security problematique* in the WBSR, I presuppose the conceptualization of fundamental issues derived from the answer to questions of what and who is securitized? – by whom? – from what threats? – and, through what means? It implies the analysis of discursive and policy processes perceived as shaping and/or changing the WBSR security landscape. It includes mainly the agency of states and the actors that represent them, external powers and international and transnational forces, and processes such as globalization and integration.
- 10 By the term "problems of the south" we refer to the security *problematique* pertaining to the southern border area of the Russian Federation and its neighbours. It includes a vast swath of land, starting with the north and north-eastern Black Sea coast and the Caucasus and ending in the junction of the Central Asian states with Russia, China and India. The partial overlap of the Russian southern area security *problematique* with that of the WBSR is evident. In Russian strategic discourse the security problems of the south are closely linked to the viability of the state, and include such internal and external security issues as total sovereignty over its decisions as a great power, territorial integrity, border impermeability, "negative" demographic balance, access to energy transport routes and resources, economic prosperity and the Islamic factor. For more see Trenin, D. 2001, *The End of Eurasia: Russia on the Border between Geopolitics and Globalization*, Moscow: Carnegie Moscow Centre, 177 – 207. A very eloquent attempt to provide evidence for the strategic and identity issues of the Russian Federation linked to the southern area *problematique*, with the epicentre in Chechnya, can be found

- in Malashenko, A. and Trenin, D. 2002, *Vremya Yuga: Cecinya v Rossii, Rossia v Cecine*, Moskva: Ghendal'f. [Time of the South: Chechnya in Russia, Russia in Chechnya].
- ¹¹ More specific to the confines of Neorealism in IR, by strategic overlay I understand a situation in which, as a reflection of regional multipolarity, great power interests come to heavily dominate a region. Thus, no regional cooperation or security community is truly possible until the pole reactions (great powers) settle on a common strategic regionalist project. For more see Buzan, B. 1991. *People, States and Fear*, New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 219 – 221.
- ¹² It ought to be mentioned that Makarychev is among the few Russian IR theoreticians writing about the BSR from an identity-centred perspective. In the few other academic venues dedicated to the BSR in Russia, this region is rather a link in a chain of vague extent, starting from the Mediterranean and ending with post-Soviet Central Asian states. We consider it an eloquent example of the still fuzzy role which Russian foreign and security policy opinion-makers and decision-takers credit to the BSR as an academic, analytical and political construct. See for example Shmeleva, N.P., Guseynova V.A., Yaz'kova, A.A. (eds.) 2006. *Sredizemnomorye – Tchernomorye – Kaspiy: Mezhdubol'shoy Evropoy i Bol'shim Blizhnim Vostokom*, Moskva: Granitsa; or, *Bol'shoye Pritschernomorye: Vyzovy XXI veka i poisk strategicheskikh resheniy*, conference transcript, 15 – 16 June 2008. Available at: <http://www.ieras.ru/grsredcher-1.htm> [accessed: 20 September 2008].
- ¹³ Quite tellingly, Makarychev does not refer to Romania and Bulgaria even once in the BSR context. Neither does he refer to it as a “wider region”, nor does he mention the Greater Caucasus and the Caspian Sea. Therefore, we assume that by implicitly excluding from the greater picture the two other important parts of the region that are the most emblematic cases for Russia's foreign security policies, he actually substitutes it for the post-Soviet realm.
- ¹⁴ Among the most important are: NATO's PfP (Partnership for Peace), NATO-Russia and NATO-Ukraine Councils; EU's European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), Eastern Partnership (EaP), Black Sea Synergy and the EU-Russia Four Spaces; (with U.S. encouragement) Georgia-Ukraine-Azerbaijan-Moldova – Organization of Democratic and Economic Development (GUAM-ODED); the Romanian-sponsored Black Sea Forum (BSF) and Turkey's comprehensive Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC).
- ¹⁵ Alastair I. Johnston, elaborating on the role of symbolic analysis and cognitive mapping in the creation of strategic identity, states that “[...] literally anything can be a symbol: A word or a phrase, a gesture or an event, a person, a place, or a thing.” He further specifies that in the conduct of foreign affairs “there are maxims and precedents that were so constantly quoted that they become clichés and, like political slogans, exert an influence in

- the shaping of policy and the making of decisions.” For more, see Johnston, A.I. 1995. *Cultural Realism. Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History*, Princeton University Press: Princeton New Jersey, 49-52.
- 16 Putin’s notorious compound sentence was: “*Some want to cut off a juicy morsel from us while others are helping them.* [italic added] They are helping because they believe that, as one of the world’s major nuclear powers, Russia is still posing a threat to someone, and therefore this threat must be removed. And terrorism is, of course, only a tool for achieving these goals.” (TV Address, 4 September 2004)
- 17 “[T]he collapse of the Soviet Union was the biggest geopolitical disaster of the century. ... Tens of millions of our co-citizens and compatriots found themselves outside of Russian territory. ... Old ideals [were] destroyed.” *Poslanie Federal’nomu Sobraniju Rossiskoy Federatsii*, 2005. <<http://president.kremlin.ru/appears/2005/04/25/1223type63372type8263487049.shtml>>.
- 18 “Empire lite” was introduced as a term by Michael Ignatieff, for the degree of a great power’s [in his research case USA] coercive apparatus interest in neo-imperial interventions (especially for economic reason) and the moods of its population, both of which influence decision-makers to intervene at the peripheries. In Russia’s case, this is especially visible in the moods of the establishment. For more see Ignatieff, Michael. 2003. *Empire Lite: Nation Building in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan*, London.
- 19 By the foreign security policy documents of the last decade we mean: National Security Concept (January 2000), Military Doctrine (April 2000), Foreign Policy Concept (June 2000), Naval Doctrine until 2020 (July 2001), Defence White Paper [MoD publication ‘The priority tasks of the development of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation’] (October 2003), Overview of Foreign Policy (March 2007), Strategy Towards 2020 (February 2008), the Foreign Policy Concept (July 2008), a Statement on Major Policy Principles (August 2008) and the National Security Strategy (May 2009), and Military Doctrine (February 2010).
- 20 The use of NGOs and media, casting territoriality into doubt, the use of language and education as political instruments, publishing anti-state newspapers, (forced) distribution of passports, renaming streets/towns, the use of religion as a political instrument and the modification of shared common memory.

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AN AWAKENING AT THE BOSPHORUS: ROBERT COLLEGE OF CONSTANTINOPLE'S BULGARIAN STUDENTS AND GRADUATES (1864-1967)

In the early 1990s the leader of a small but influential political party, which is in principle associated with the Turkish-speaking Bulgarian voters, said that Bulgaria's way to Europe leads through the Bosphorus. These words caused one of the major political controversies in the post-communist Bulgarian society and are still not fully forgotten. In so speaking the said leader meant that the economic prosperity of Bulgaria, striving in those years to a full membership in European Union, depends actually on the investments made by Turkish companies. In reality it did happen in part although this fact is not explicitly admitted by most of the Bulgarian leaders. Such politically colored controversies remain usually limited within the very contemporary political framework and historical reminiscences are in principle lacking. One, however, could draw a parallel between these controversial words and the generations of Bulgarian leaders who happened to study at a college on the Bosphorus, and namely the so-called Robert College. Being the oldest American college outside the United States of America and founded in 1863 by American Protestant missionaries in Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire, which then still included the Bulgarian lands, the college attracted a lot of Bulgarians, quite many of whom became later leaders in the process of Bulgaria's national and political emancipation. Many of them continued their study at prestigious universities in Europe. After graduation most of them returned to Bulgaria and served its newly established institutions. Prior to World War I the college gave education to two Bulgarian prime ministers and twelve ministers, tens of deputies to the national assembly, hundreds of city- and town mayors, prefects, and men of good public reputation. In other words, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century one of the most important ways of Bulgaria to Europe led indeed

through the Bosphorus. And more precisely, it led through Robert College on the Bosphorus.

Robert College's history covered three quite different periods in Bulgarian history: the foundation and the first years of the college coincided with the last decades of Ottoman rule in the Bulgarian lands (1863-1878); the improvement of the college coincided with the development and strengthening of the independent Bulgarian state (1879-1944); and finally that period in the college's history, which is associated with its ongoing Turkification (that ended up in 1971 by transformation of one part in a private secondary school and another part in a Turkish state university, the Bosphorus/Boğaziçi University), coincided with the post World War II Sovietization of the Bulgarian state. Unintentionally, the men, who were engaged with the establishment and the further development of the college, found the college quite tightly connected, as they frequently admitted, with the fate of the Bulgarian people. Thus, Bulgarians played an important role in the college's history and equally the college itself played a significant role in Bulgarian history. This fact explains the necessity of a closer look at that uncommon symbiosis which involved Bulgarians, Americans, Europe and the Bosphorus.

Being restricted within the limitations of the present paper, what I am intended to do here is just to highlight the place and role of the Bulgarians who studied and eventually graduated from Robert College, leaving the in-depth analysis for a future extended publication. In other words, what I am going to present here is an outline rather than a comprehensive study. I am convinced, however, that even so, one needs to put the problem in a way, which differs from the previous studies by using new approaches and raising new questions. It could be done through access to archival sources that have been until recently almost inaccessible (or with very limited access).

The available researches on Robert College are based mainly on published memoirs of the college's presidents, instructors, and graduates and they neglect almost completely the bulk of available archival documentation, preserved in the USA and Turkey. Hence an in-depth academic research on history of Robert College based on documentary evidences is still lacking.

Amongst the published memoirs the most well-known are probably the memoirs of the first president Cyrus Hamlin (1863-1877),¹ of the second one George Washburn (1877-1903),² which are published in the original language and translation (in Turkish and Bulgarian),³ and the third

president Caleb Frank Gates (1903-1932).⁴ The memoirs of Lynn Scipio, who established the Engineering School at Robert College in 1912 and stayed there as an instructor until 1942,⁵ as well as of Aptullah Kuran (class of 1948), who was vice-president between 1969 and 1971, and then president of the newly established the Bosphorus University, are also well known.⁶ A lot of scattered information can be also found in the memoirs of many of the college's alumni,⁷ some Bulgarians including (Mihail Madjaroff, class of 1877,⁸ and Assen Christophoroff, class of 1931⁹). These are more or less explored in several studies on Robert College done by May Fincanci,¹⁰ Keith M. Greenwood,¹¹ John Freely,¹² Ivan Ilchev and Plamen Mitev,¹³ as well as others.¹⁴ There are also several studies on the Bulgarian students and graduates of Robert College based mainly on memoirs and partly on Bulgarian archives and limited to the early period of the college's history.¹⁵ Robert College was also studied within broader-scoped studies on the history of foreign schools in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey.¹⁶

As for the archival material, Robert College has a relatively big and well organized archive, which has been recently removed from the Board of Trustees' New York Office to Columbia University's Rare Book and Manuscript Library and is now available for academic research.¹⁷ It includes correspondence, governance documents, faculty files, building and facilities files, students and alumni registers, newspaper articles, as well as an extensive collection of photographs.¹⁸ Until recently the acquisition of Columbia University remained, with a few exceptions, almost unexplored. However, within the framework of a project entitled "Robert College of Istanbul's Bulgarian Students and Alumni" and conducted at New Europe College, Bucharest (the 2010-2011 Black Sea Link Program),¹⁹ in the fall of 2010 I had the opportunity to explore the New York archive.²⁰ Another collection, by far much smaller, including correspondence of Cyrus Hamlin and George Washburn, as well as letters sent by various persons, Bulgarian students of Robert College including, to Henrietta (Hamlin) Washburn, Cyrus Hamlin's daughter and George Washburn's wife, is at present preserved in Houghton Library, Harvard University.²¹

On the other hand, a great number of documents related to the establishment and function of Robert College, as well as to issues concerning its faculty and student body, are available at the Ottoman Department of Turkey's Public Record Office (*Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi*). In particular, these are part of the official correspondence between the

Ottoman authorities and the college's presidency, as well as residence, travel and research permits given to members of the faculty staff and to the students, governmental investigations concerning the educational policy and practices in the college, etc. The Ottoman archival material, which is available in Istanbul, is not previously systematically explored. Within the framework of the above-mentioned project at New Europe College, in April 2011 I explored some of these archival documents, which number tens of hundreds (according to the online catalog of the Turkish Public Record Office). There exist a number of documents related to Robert College collected mainly in the archive of the Ministry of Education (*Maarif Vekaleti*) and the Istanbul Directorate of Education (*İstanbul Maarif Müdürlüğü*). Those of them dating from Atatürk's period (1923-1938) are explored by Ayten Sezer.²²

As said above, the goal of the present research is to outline the place and role of Robert College in formation and development of Bulgarian political elite and intelligentsia. It requires a closer look at the nature of the college itself, its theory of education, as well as the social background and the career of the Bulgarian students after graduation from the college. By doing a multiple career-line analysis and outlining the professional, social and intellectual profile of Robert College's Bulgarian alumni, one can find out certain similarities and a given logics lying behind them. In so doing, typical career models or, in Dobrinka Parusheva's words, "collective structure of the individual ways to the top" could be figured out.²³

By focusing on Robert College's curriculum influenced by the Protestant educational ideals of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, on the one hand, and on the career-line analysis of Robert College's Bulgarian alumni, on the other, the present research attempts to outline the general profile of those Bulgarians who were educated in a leading American Protestant educational institution located in the heart of the Ottoman Empire. The research hypothesis dwells on the assumption that the educational background had much to do with the political affiliation of the Bulgarian leaders during pre-1878 Liberation movement and in post-Ottoman Bulgaria. It is well known that most of the Bulgarian alumni of Robert College became later leaders and active members of Liberal and Democratic parties and the research will suggest a plausible explanation of this.

Foundation and Nature of Robert College

When George Washburn, the second president of the college, accounts in his memoir its foundation, in the very beginning he makes it clear that although it was founded by Christopher Robert (d. 1878), a New York merchant descended from a French Huguenot family, “the truth is that the college grew out of the natural development of American missions in Turkey.”²⁴

The missionaries considered Asia Minor (Anatolia) “Bible Land”. Therefore they aimed at regaining this land from Islam to Christianity by propagating the Christian principles through education, social (i.e. hospitals) and publishing activities, and engaging with gender and political issues. The official recognition of the American presence on Ottoman soil in 1830 facilitated the missionary activities which had been so far secretly executed. These missionaries were sent mainly by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), the Missionary Society of Methodist Episcopal Church, as well as by Women’s Board of Missions, American Bible Society, and a few others.²⁵

In 1824 the first American Protestant school on Ottoman soil was opened in Beirut with seven students. In 1834 a similar school for Armenian boys was opened at Pera (Beyoğlu) in Istanbul. In 1859 ABCFM opened the so-called *Euphrates College* in Harput (today’s Elazığ), which attracted local Armenians, who called it *Yeprad College*. From 1824 through 1886 the American missionaries operating within the Ottoman borders (mostly ABCFM) opened nearly 400 schools.²⁶ On the eve of World War I (1914) there were 426 American schools in the Ottoman Empire with 25,000 students.²⁷

Adnan Şişman claims that besides its activities to open Protestant churches in order to proselytize Ottoman subjects, to establish hospitals and orphanages, to set up presses to print texts used in the missionary services, ABCFM aimed also “to open schools in order to stimulate the minorities to resist the Ottoman state and to achieve their independence, to train students who would be leaders of the future independent states and who would serve the American interests.”²⁸

Mithat Aydın also emphasizes the “historic part”, which the American missionary schools played in the process of establishment and development of new national states, especially Bulgaria. According to him, the real reason lying behind the systematic approach to provide their students an education of best quality in order to train them as future national leaders

was that in so doing the American missionaries secured their success and presence among the minorities.²⁹ One can speculate also that the missionaries put emphasis on the distinction between the ethnic minorities which were attached to the Orthodox Church (since the Ottoman state recognized not ethnic minorities but religious communities through the so-called *millet* system) in order to weaken the impact of the Orthodox church and hence to have a basis to strengthen their own influence over the weakened links of the Orthodox chain.

According to George Washburn the American missionaries saw “nothing corresponding to an American college in the empire”, that is, they noticed the lack of institutions of higher education, and therefore Christopher Robert, being advised in 1857 by missionary H. G. Otis Dwight’s sons James and William Dwight, decided to establish such a college.³⁰

Robert College was founded through the outstanding personal efforts of Cyrus Hamlin (d. 1900). As Washburn remarks, “Dr. Hamlin was the College.”³¹ He was sent by ABCFM to Istanbul in 1840 in order to restart the activity of the missionary school at Pera, whose activity was meanwhile suspended because of the opposition of the Armenian Patriarchate. It was restarted with two Armenian students but closed again in 1841 due to the complaints of the influential Patriarchate. Then in 1843 it moved to Bebek, a neighborhood on the European side of the Bosphorus, with 22 male students (mostly Armenians). In 1856 Hamlin left ABCFM because of disagreements in view of the school curriculum and began in 1860 preparations for the establishment of Robert College. The college opened its first school year in September 1863 first in Bebek and moved later to the nearby neighborhood Rumeli Hisari.

Although Robert College was founded and sponsored by missionaries who belonged previously to ABCFM and relied upon the school network established by the Board throughout the Ottoman Empire, it was by no means attached to the Board itself. As Washburn points out, James and William Dwight suggested Christopher Robert to found a college, “not in any way connected with the Mission and tolerant of the religious prejudices of the natives.”³² Washburn points out, however, that the religious status of Robert College had been made clear in the constitution adopted by the trustees.³³

While ABCFM insisted on education based strictly on Protestant values, it seems that the college was not aiming at proselytizing students belonging to different Christian denominations to Protestantism and this

was a key for attracting students from the local communities, the basic aim being to strengthen Christianity among them as a whole. Washburn draws attention to the fact that small number of Robert College's graduates had become clergymen and that few of them had been Protestants.³⁴ In his annual report for 1914 the then Robert College's president Caleb F. Gates wrote the following (p. 6):

"Robert College was founded as a Christian College. Its Constitution requires that the Scriptures be read at least once every day of the school year, and that all the students and faculty attend. The purpose of its founders was clearly to make it a Christian College, and the Administration of the college holds strongly to that purpose. We aim to present Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and to make sure that every student shall understand the claims of a true Christianity. No pressure is brought to bear upon students of other religions to change their faith, but the presence of students of other religions does not modify our presentation of Christian truth."³⁵

Robert College preceded the foundation of the so-called *Mekteb-i Sultani* (Imperial School) at Galatasaray, which was opened by the Ottoman authorities in 1868 as a replica of a French lycée (that is, during the French influence in Constantinople in the first ten years of Abdulaziz's reign between 1861 and 1876, as Washburn points out³⁶), and the first Ottoman university, so-called *Darü'l-fünun* (House of Sciences) which was established only in 1874 (and reestablished in 1900).

Hence Robert College was quite unique an educational institution which differed more or less from the missionary schools, from any American college (being established outside America and adapted to the local specificities and necessities³⁷), and from the other schools on Ottoman soil. In his book *The Bulgarian Principality*, published in 1878, Konstantin Josef Jireček, a Czech historian and slavist, who became later Bulgarian minister of public instruction, points out that although Robert College's level is similar to that of the Czech gymnasias, the graduates of the latter should envy those young Bulgarians for the independence, freshness and quickness of their spirit which could be developed only in the good schools of the practical Americans."³⁸

Robert College's Theory of Education

In Washburn's annual report for 1896-1897 (p. 10-12) one can find quite comprehensive a description of the college's educational ideals. Under the heading "Our Theory of Education" he says the following:

"All agree that there is something in our system of education which has developed a new class of men in the East of a higher order than had been seen before... It is based upon the belief that the true object of college education is the development of the faculties and the formation of character... The primary object of the studies is to exercise and develop mental power, rather than to cram the memory with learning. We do not profess to give a technical education of any kind, but to discipline the minds of our students that they may be able to master any science, or profession, which they may take up after they leave the college. But, above all, our object is to develop and form the character of our students. Moral development, spiritual discipline, is the most essential part of education. This cannot be secured from the study of books. It must come chiefly from the personal influence of the teachers over the students, not only in the chapel and the classroom, but in personal intercourse at all times. There must be such a development of character that when the student goes out from the influence of the teacher he shall be already under the control of fixed principles, based upon the law of Christ, which will strengthen him against temptation and make a true man of him. That we have had some success in forming such characters...is probably the secret of the reputation which the college has gained in the East."³⁹

In his memoir Washburn puts the same in a different way:

"Our theory of college education is not new. In substance it is as old as Plato and Aristotle. Its chief end is the highest possible development of character. The principal work of the College is disciplinary... The most important work of the College is to train and develop the physical, intellectual and moral powers of the student... The discipline of these powers, the training of the will, the formation of habits which will bring the life into harmony with the will of God, this is the highest and best work of the College. Such is our theory..."⁴⁰

The theory of education applied at Robert College was based on the Protestant ideals of education which implied a humane relationship between teacher and pupil and the following three distinctive modes

of child-rearing: “evangelical” (more authoritarian and repressive), “moderate” (stressing on duty, discipline and training of self-control), and “genteel” (more easygoing and encouraging self-assertion) modes of child-rearing.⁴¹ It is obvious that out of those three modes Robert College provided education based upon the “moderate” one.

That the college was considered an important tool for formation of individuals with certain ideals and political attitudes is obvious from Washburn’s pitiful note about a leading Bulgarian politician who happened to be attracted to study in Russia instead of Robert College. He explains in his memoir that after France’s defeat in the Franco-Prussian war of 1871

“Russia took the place of France as the chief enemy of the College and used her influence to turn Bulgarian students from Robert College to Russia for their education. Unfortunately for Bulgaria she opened the way for a boy in Tirnova, where Dr. Long was a missionary, and a friend of this boy, whose name was Stambouloff, to go to Russia for a free education in a theological school. If he had come to Robert College he would have had other ideas of government than those which he learned in Russia. He was probably the strongest man that Bulgaria has produced and saved Bulgaria from Russian domination; but so far as the internal government of the country was concerned he too often fell back upon Russian methods.”⁴²

In the course of time the college’s educational ideal to develop strong characters superseded its religious character. “With the increasing enrollment of Turks in Robert College and the growth of nationalism, the religious character of the College raised in important question,” as Caleb F. Gates admits in his memoir.⁴³

A report, entitled “Perspectives for Robert College” and written in 1953 by David Garwood and Hilary Sumner-Boyd (p. 3), reveals, “Though Robert College grew out of the missionary movement of the nineteenth century and in its first half-century partook of the missionary spirit, this aspect of the College’s purpose and character is now entirely superseded. Nevertheless, the development of character, high ideals, and integrity by example and precept remains the guiding principle of the institution.”⁴⁴

Robert College's Course of Study and Academic Degree

Cyrus Hamlin considered Robert College a continuation and enlargement of his work at the Bebek Seminary⁴⁵ and set up Robert College along the same lines as the Bebek school, that is, with students going through the preparatory division before going on to the collegiate level.⁴⁶

Washburn explains in his memoir that the college's curriculum had been settled down upon "a program of studies for the four college classes which was based upon what was generally adopted at that time in New England colleges, but modified to adapt it to the practical wants" of its students. He stresses, however, that the great practical difficulty was the multiplicity of languages. Besides the English, the language of the college, the Latin, needed in order its diplomas to be recognized by the European universities, and the French, which every student wished to study, the Armenian, Bulgarian, Greek and Turkish students had to learn the official Turkish language, as well as their own languages in order to be able to "hold their places among their own people." Hence each student studied at least five languages.⁴⁷

It is not surprising then that, according to Washburn, there were wags proposing that the college should be named Babel College.⁴⁸

According to a *Tabular View of the Course of Study in Robert College*, appended to a printed advertisement for the academic year 1870-1871, prepared during Hamlin's presidency in English, Armenian, Bulgarian, and Greek and providing information about the college, its admission rules, course of study, terms and fees,⁴⁹ as well as Washburn's account for the year 1875 in his memoir,⁵⁰ the college's curriculum included lectures in the following disciplines:

- Mathematics: algebra, book keeping (optional), geometry, trigonometry, analytical geometry (optional), calculus (optional), surveying, navigation, and mathematics of astronomy (optional);
- Sciences: natural history; zoology, physiology and hygiene, botany (optional), physics, chemistry, astronomy, analytical chemistry (optional), geology, mineralogy (optional), quantitative analysis (optional);
- Humanities: physical and political geography of the world, history, history of civilization, philosophy of history, political economy, commercial law, parliamentary law, international law, mental philosophy (psychology), history of philosophy, moral philosophy (ethics), Paley's evidences (William Paley's *View of the Evidences of Christianity*, 1794), oratory (rhetoric), disputation, logic, English, French, German (optional),

Armenian, Bulgarian, Greek, Latin, and Turkish languages, drawing, painting, and music (optional).

In an advertisement for the college signed by Washburn and published in Bulgarian in the newspaper *Danube* on August 8, 1876, along with the above-mentioned subjects Italian Language and pedagogy are also mentioned.⁵¹

Thus Robert College provided four years of undergraduate course in the Liberal Arts with its two branches, and namely *trivium* (including grammar, rhetoric, and logic) and *quadrivium* (including mathematics, geometry, astronomy, and music), as well as in the sciences. Its graduates received the degree of *Artium Baccalaureus* (A.B.) or *Bachelor in Arts* (B.A.), *Bachelor in Sciences* (B.S.), *Bachelor in Engineering* (B.E.) as of the School of Engineering was opened in 1912 (the older division was named College for Arts and Sciences). As Washburn remarks, in 1868, that is, the fifth year of its operation, the Armenian student Hagopos Djedjizian and the Bulgarian student Petco Gorbanoff were the first students who were selected by Cyrus Hamlin to graduate and who received the degree of B.A.⁵²

Robert College's Student Body

When Robert College started its educational activity on September 16, 1863, there were only four students enrolled. By the end of the first school year their number increased to 20. In the course of time the total number of enrolled students increased gradually to exceed one thousand in the mid-1950s.⁵³ There were some drastic drops in number both of the enrolled students and the graduates due to the negative impact of the wars between the nations which were represented in Robert College's student body such as the 1897 Greek-Turkish war, 1912-1913 Balkan wars, and World War I (1914-1918) and World War II (1939-1945). The Great Depression (1929-late 1930s) also exerted depressing effect on the enrollments figures, as the annual report for 1931-1932 reveals.⁵⁴

A prospect of Robert College for 1890 provides the following overall statistics about the student body: whole number of students, 1863-1890: 1,551; graduated, 1868-1890: 263; average time spent in the college by non-graduates, 3 years; by graduates, 6 years.⁵⁵

In 1903 Washburn summarized the enrollment and graduation figures as follows: "At the end of forty years we had done something for the

education of more than 2,500 young men of many nationalities. The average length of time spent in the college by these students was about three years; 435 of them graduated with honor, after from four to seven years in the college. Of these 144 were Armenians, 195 Bulgarians, 76 Greeks, 14 English and Americans, 3 Germans, 2 Hebrews, 1 Turk."⁵⁶

The number of Robert College's graduates was quite moderate. Moreover, the increase of the number of enrolled students did not lead automatically to an increase in the number of graduates. The latter was over 10 percent of the number of enrolled students only six times between 1868-1930, and namely in the classes of 1877, 1884, 1886, 1887, 1888, and 1894. George Washburn gives an explanation of this by drawing attention to the 1860s- and the 1870s-Ottoman realities:

"If we take the whole number of students who have entered the college since its foundation, no more than one in six has completed the course and graduated. The reason for this is that when the college was founded the only idea that the people of Turkey had of education was the acquiring a practical knowledge of three or four languages, and this idea is still very common. Then again the majority of our students come to the college to be prepared for business and are always ready to leave when their parents find a promising opening for them. Many are too poor to complete their education. Again in Turkey proper there are very few openings for Christians in professional life or in government offices, so that the need of a college education is not apparent... But we have never measured the value of our work by the number of our graduates. The average length of time spent in the College by those who have not graduated is more than three years. We do what we can to induce those who are of more than ordinary ability to finish their course, because there is a great need of such men to become leaders of their people..."⁵⁷

The above-mentioned prospect of Robert College for 1890, prepared by Washburn, stresses the same situation:

"In the early history of the College very few of the students remained to complete their course and graduate. Their parents could not understand the necessity of so long a course of study. Even now many students enter without any intention of graduating, but the proportion of graduates is steadily increasing.

The graduates of the College have already played a most important part in the History of the East, especially in Bulgaria, where they have filled the highest offices of State, and exerted a vast influence in the moral, intellectual, and political development of the people.”⁵⁸

As a matter of fact, Robert College itself considered the first three decades of its history a “Bulgarian period”. An unsigned article, which appeared in a college newsletter in 1923 under the title *Bulgarian Alumni of Robert College*, points out the following:

“The first period in the history of Robert College may be termed the Bulgarian period. From 1868 to 1890 the majority of its graduates were Bulgarians. This period includes the time when Bulgaria became independent and was building up a new kingdom. They had great need of educated men for leaders and they found them in the graduates of Robert College who contributed very much to the founding of this new state. Nine of the graduates of Robert College became cabinet ministers and two of these held the office of prime minister.”⁵⁹

Robert College’s “Bulgarian Period”

In the concluding chapter of his memoir Washburn remarks that the Bulgarians “had discovered” Robert College.⁶⁰ It is the third chapter, however, where he explains how this “discovery” happened:

“When they began to seek for enlightenment their attention was first directed to Robert College by Dr. Long, then an American missionary in Bulgaria and later a professor in the College. Although Dr. Hamlin had interested himself in the Bulgarians in 1856 and used his influence to have missions established in Bulgaria, it does not appear from their correspondence that earlier he or Mr. Robert had ever thought of them as possible students in the College, and Mr. Robert died without knowing that he had played an important part in founding a new state in Europe.”⁶¹

Further in his memoir Washburn stresses how important Dr. Albert L. Long (d. 1901) was for the recruitment of Robert College’s Bulgarian students. In the academic year 1872-1873 Dr. Long was appointed professor of natural science at the college and Washburn describes him in the following way:

“He had been a missionary of the American Methodist Church in Bulgaria for some twelve years, where he had won the confidence and affection of the people and with Dr. Riggs had translated the Bible into Bulgarian. It was through his influence that Bulgarians first came to the College. No college president ever had a more devoted and efficient associate, and he was a tower of strength in the College until he died in 1901, mourned by all Bulgarians and by every student who had been under him.”⁶²

On the occasion of Dr. Long’s death in 1901 Washburn repeats the same.⁶³ As a matter of fact, since the Bulgarians lacked institutions of high and higher education well until their political emancipation in 1878 (with few exceptions) they used to send their children to foreign schools in order to provide them with education of contemporary standard. The Bulgarians first explored the educational opportunities within the Ottoman Empire. In the early nineteenth century they used to send their sons to the renowned Greek schools on Ottoman soil, as well as to western and central Europe. Toward the mid-nineteenth century they turned gradually to the capital city of Istanbul, where new Ottoman and foreign schools were opened. After the Crimean war (1853-1856) Russia’s gymnasias, theological seminaries, military schools and universities became more attractive for Bulgarians because of the lower fees and the closeness of religion and language.⁶⁴ The education of those Bulgarians was financially supported either by their relatively wealthy families or by sponsors (charity organizations and rich individuals).⁶⁵

According to the rough statistics about Robert College, provided in an unsigned text, entitled *American Educational Institutions in Bulgaria (1860-1948)*, “for a period about 80 years more than 300 Bulgarians graduated from the college. Besides the graduates there were another 2,000-2,500 students, who did not finish their study because of financial, family and other reasons.”⁶⁶

According to the earliest lists of students to be found in Robert College archive, the first Bulgarian student, Petar Sitchanoff, enrolled in 1864.⁶⁷ The preserved annual reports for the 1950s are the latest sources to mention the presence of Bulgarian students at Robert College.⁶⁸ According to the preserved alumni records, between 1868 and 1967, 330 Bulgarians received a B.A. degree, Kiril Kirof being the last one (1967), and 9 others a B.E. degree from the School of Engineering.⁶⁹

Washburn provides clear evidences of how the international political dynamics affected the presence of given nationalities, Bulgarian in

particular, in Robert College. As he explains in his memoir, after France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian war of 1871 "Russia took the place of France as the chief enemy of the College and used her influence to turn Bulgarian students from Robert College to Russia for their education."⁷⁰ This may explain the fall of the number of Bulgarian students from 40 in 1871-1872 to 31 in 1872-1873, and then the increase again up to 43 in the next year (see Appendix).

In the course of twelve successive years, from 1877 through 1890, the Bulgarian students outnumbered the students of other nationalities, despite some inconsistencies. Even the fact that in 1878 northern Bulgaria became a widely autonomous Principality and southern Bulgaria an autonomous Ottoman province under the name Eastern Rumelia did not affect at all the Bulgarian enrollments at Robert College. Moreover, the peak of Bulgarian students at the college ever was in the school years 1881-1882 and 1882-1883 (105 and 110, respectively). The reasons for this remarkable presence of Bulgarian students in Robert College were the lack of an established schooling system in the immediate aftermath of Bulgaria's liberation, on the one hand, and the prestige that Robert College succeeded to achieve among the Bulgarians in pre-liberation time by supporting morally the Bulgarian emancipation movement, on the other.

After 1883 there was a significant decrease in the number of the Bulgarian students. On the one hand, this coincided with the school reform in the Bulgarian principality initiated by the minister of public instruction Konstantin Josef Jireček and concluded in 1883. Due to this reform the number of Bulgarian gymnasias had significantly increased. Washburn was also aware of this and wrote in his memoir: "The number of our Bulgarian students had already fallen from 110 to 71, owing to the opening of similar institutions there."⁷¹

On the other hand, a struggle for the young Bulgarian minds had taken place. In the early 1880s the Bulgarian prince Alexander suspended the Constitution, being supported by the Conservative party, and brought in Russian officials to govern the country. In 1882 and 1883 the Bulgarian cabinets were headed by Russian generals (L. N. Soboleff and A. V. Kaulbars), who, in the course of "the Russification of everything", in Washburn's words,⁷² took measures to restrict the activities of the American Protestant missionaries, the closure of two American schools including (in Svishtov and Lovech). In 1883 the Russophile Bulgarian newspaper *Slavianin* accused publicly Robert College for destructing the Orthodoxy of its students, recommending the Bulgarians to withdraw their

children from Robert College and to register them in Bulgarian gymnasia. Its publications affected to a certain extent the Bulgarian public opinion and some Bulgarians really did so.⁷³

The “Bulgarian period” terminated after the second anti-Robert College campaign, executed during 1888 and 1889, this time by the newspaper *Selianin*, an issue of the Bulgarian Orthodox Synod. Vasil Karayovoff, who graduated from the college in 1881, had published several articles, recommending the Bulgarians not to send their children to Robert College since its training level had been lower than that of a Bulgarian gymnasium and because of its anti-Orthodox policy. This caused another serious fall in number of the enrolled Bulgarian students.⁷⁴ It was also true for the number of Bulgarian graduates after the late 1880s. Robert College’s president Washburn was aware of this and stated in his memoir that in the academic year 1888-1889 the number of students was less due to “the unsettled state of affairs” in Bulgaria, where “all the Bulgarian troubles came from Russia”. Washburn concludes that “it was this generally unsatisfactory state of things which so greatly reduced the number of Bulgarian students.”⁷⁵

The first three decades of Robert College’s history were mainly associated with the Armenian and Bulgarian students, whose number exceeded almost twice the number of the following nationality, the Greeks, not to speak about the Turks, the Jews, the English native speakers and those of any other nationality. However, if taken into consideration the number of the students, who had completed their course of study and graduated from the college, it is obvious that the Bulgarian graduates prevailed significantly over the Armenians and the Greeks, as the table below clearly shows.

Number of Robert College’s Students and Graduates between 1863 and 1890

According to Their Nationality

	Armenians	Bulgarians	Greeks	Turks	Jews	English speakers	Others
Students	1344	1338	727	52	13	183	630
Graduates	89	146	18	-	2	5	2

After the fall in number of the Robert College's Bulgarian students in the late 1880s, the Armenians became for a while dominant in terms of registered students.⁷⁶ However, as of the mid-1890s through 1924 the Greek students outnumbered significantly the other nationalities represented at Robert College, and as a result a few years later (the period in which the Greek students completed their courses at the college) the number of the Greek graduates became prevailing over the graduates of other nationalities.

Washburn gives in his memoir the following explanation of the Greek outburst:

"For the first time in the history of the College the Greeks outnumbered the Armenians and the Bulgarians. The Bulgarians had fallen off, owing to the establishment of the government gymnasias, where students were educated at very small cost to their parents, and on account of the many difficulties put in the way of Bulgarians coming to Constantinople by the Turkish government. Constantinople was no longer a political or a business center for Bulgaria. The Armenians were suffering from the political troubles here and in the interior. The Greeks, on the other hand, had come to realize at last that this was not a Bulgarian college, that it was no part of its object to attack or weaken the Orthodox Church..."⁷⁷

Washburn claims that from 1891 the Bulgarians no longer constituted the majority of Robert College's graduating classes,⁷⁸ although four years in the 1890s (that is, almost half the decade) the Bulgarian graduates were still prevailing over the students of other nationality according to the figures provided by Washburn himself.⁷⁹

After having left a remarkable imprint on Robert College's first three decades, the Bulgarian students had always been a sentimental issue for the college authorities, and especially for its second president George Washburn, who was personally engaged with the Bulgarian movement for national emancipation in the 1870s. In the 1899 annual report (p. 6) he wrote the following regretful statement:

"The number of Bulgarian students is less than the many years, to our regret. There are various reasons for this. Russian influence is now very strong there and is actively exercised to prevent students from coming here. There are good schools of all grades in the country, either free or very inexpensive, and for three years past the financial condition of the country has been very bad. It is essentially a farming country and there has been a succession of bad harvests."⁸⁰

Three years later the situation was the same as the 1901 annual report (p. 8) reveals: "It is many years since we have so few Bulgarian students and we regret the loss but it was due to financial condition of Bulgaria for the past four years."⁸¹

Besides the economic conditions, the wars, in which Bulgaria was involved, had also negative effect on the enrollment of Bulgarian students at Robert College. According to Gates's annual report for 1910-1911 the Bulgarian students boycotted the annual Field Day, "owing to national feeling" on the eve of the 1912-1913 Balkan wars.⁸² The situation in the college during the wars seemed far from being peaceful as Gates reveals in his memoir: "It can easily be imagined what a severe test was imposed upon the students of Robert College by these events. Their respective nations were at war with one another. Students and teachers were being called for military service, and many were anxious to know the fate of their families."⁸³ In his annual report for 1912-1913 (p. 59) Gates points out that the Bulgarian Department had suffered more from the war than any other.⁸⁴ The college was in a similar troublesome situation during World War I. An Ottoman archival document, dated June 8, 1915, reveals that the Bulgarian students had missed the annual exams at the college since they had returned to their homeland.⁸⁵ Gates's annual report for 1915-1916 provides a description of the difficult conditions under which the school had been operating for during the Balkan Wars and the first two years of World War I.⁸⁶ As a result the number of Bulgarian students decreased more than three times from 64 in 1913-1914 to 19 in 1918-1919, while in the following years their number reached and even surpassed the prewar average figures. Besides the end of war, another important reason for the increase of the number of enrolled Bulgarians was, as the Bulgarian historian Nikola Natchoff pointed out in the 1920s, that with regard to its course of study Robert College was in between classic gymnasium and university and therefore with no analog in the Bulgarian schooling system.⁸⁷

The annual report for 1925-1926 (p. 29-30) reveals that there were 102 registered Bulgarian students and makes the following comment:

"This is a very creditable showing when we remember that the college fees for Bulgarians increased... and that the Bulgarian students have been required to study Turkish for five periods per week, although this language is of very little use to them. In view of the fact that an American school is to be established in Sofia...it becomes a question whether the number

of Bulgarian students doing to Robert College will fall off. The present indications are that there will always be Bulgarian parents who will be glad to send their children to Robert College which has played such an important part in the history of their country and which has given to Bulgaria some of its most renowned leaders.”⁸⁸

The annual report for the next 1926-1927 (p. 8) draws attention to the smaller number of the Bulgarian students due to the increase of the fees and explicitly underlines that “the Bulgarian element is a very important one in the college and we should be very sorry to have it diminished.”⁸⁹

Robert College’s Bulgarian Alumni

After graduation from Robert College most of its Bulgarian alumni continued their education mostly in prestigious European universities, and occasionally in the states. Law, medicine, and economics were the most popular fields of specialization. The following table shows the occupation that the Robert College’s Bulgarian graduates chose and practiced during their lifetime, according to data provided by the college’s alumni records.

Bulgarian Graduates’ Choice of Profession

Occupation	1890	1900	1967
Businessmen (merchants, bankers, financiers, insurers, accountants, farmers, entrepreneurs)	35	45	85
Teachers (including professors and school directors)	66	79	86
Government officials (mostly of high rank)	33	38	43
Jurists (judges, lawyers)	30	50	67
Physicians	16	19	22
Army officers	14	15	15
Editors/Publicists	9	10	10

Preachers	2	2	2
Engineers	5	6	21
Translators/Interpreters	7	9	12
Other	1		5
Unknown	7	15	66

The table shows that most of the Bulgarian graduates were involved in business and financial sector. It is not surprising since most of the Bulgarian students were from families of wealthy Bulgarian merchants and entrepreneurs such as Taptchileshkoff, Geshoff, Madjaroff, Baldjief, to mention but a few. However, quite many students did not choose their father's business but became judges and lawyers, physicians, engineers (especially after the establishment of the Engineering School to Robert College), diplomats and translators (due to the high level of the language skills adopted at the college). Many of the Bulgarian graduates of Robert College became after graduation teachers, 16 of them in the college itself: Petko Gorbanoff (class of 1868), Stephan Thomoff (class of 1869), Stephan Panaretoff (class of 1871), Ivan Slaveykoff (class of 1871), Constantine Stoiloff (class of 1871), Peter Dimitroff (class of 1872), George Peneff (class of 1880), Theodore Shipkoff (class of 1881), Peter Voikoff (class of 1883), Stoyan Manoloff (class of 1887), Tzvetan Ilieff (class of 1893), Svetoslav Salgandjief (class of 1895), Bojil Bijoff (class of 1897), Cyril Panaretoff (class of 1912), Jupiter Petroff (class of 1915), George Popoff (class of 1920). However, in most cases the teaching position was only temporarily held. As a whole Robert College's Bulgarian alumni pertained to the upper middle class, which, according to sociologist Max Weber's definition, consists of well-educated professionals with graduate degrees and comfortable incomes.

Since college prospects for the years 1890 and 1900 provide quantitative data about all alumni's choice of profession,⁹⁰ juxtaposition between the overall data and those related to the Bulgarian alumni can outline some specifics as far as the Bulgarian alumni are concerned. Besides the figures the following table reveals also the percentage of increase in number of the preferred professions.

Alumni of Robert College's Choice of Profession

Occupation	Total 1890	Bulgarians 1890	Total 1900	Bulgarians		Total Increase 1890- 1900	Bulgarians	
				1900	1967		Increase 1890- 1900	Increase 1900- 1967
Business Finances	75	35	110	45	85	47 %	29 %	89 %
Teachers	71	66	88	79	86	24 %	20 %	9 %
Government	46	33	50	38	43	9 %	15 %	13 %
Jurists	36	30	50	50	67	39 %	67 %	34 %
Physicians	24	16	37	19	22	54 %	19 %	16 %
Army officers	17	14	20	15	15	18 %	7 %	0 %
Editors/ Publicists	10	9	12	10	10	20 %	11 %	0 %
Preachers	10	2	12	2	2	20 %	0 %	0 %
Engineers	5	5	10	6	21	100 %	20 %	250 %

The table shows clearly that the teaching positions were attractive for the Bulgarian graduates of Robert College predominantly in the period prior to 1900. It could be explained with the fact that in the late nineteenth century a modern educational system was established in Bulgaria, as mentioned above, and it needed well prepared faculty members. It was also true for the army positions since the newly established Bulgarian army had great need of officers. There is a striking disproportion between the Bulgarian graduates and the graduates of other nationality with regard to the following three fields: business, law and government. When juxtaposed the increase percentages between 1890 and 1900, it becomes evident that, in comparison with the other nationalities, the Bulgarian graduates were more inclined to take positions in government and judicial system at the expense of being engaged in business. It is not surprising since amongst the nationalities represented at Robert College in those times it was the Bulgarians who were creating their own state institutions.

This phenomenon was specific for the independent Balkan states established in the nineteenth century, as R. Daskalov points out. According to him, these states pursued economic policies of protectionism and encouraging of the infant industries that created a close parasitic relationship between business and the expanding bureaucracy. Yet, it was

not business but civil service that was more attractive and education was pursued with the purpose of procuring an office in the state apparatus.⁹¹

Prior to World War I many of the Robert College's Bulgarian students and graduates served their people and state by choosing public career.

Some of them such as Petko Gorbanoff (class of 1868), Stephan Thomoff (class of 1869), and Alexander Ludskanoff (class of 1875) took part as intelligence officers in the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish war, one of whose major results was the Bulgarian political emancipation.⁹² As Washburn points out Ludskanoff, in particular, "had distinguished himself on the staff of General Skobelev, who spoke of him to me in the highest terms. The necessity of such appointments grew out of the ignorance of the language of the country by the Russians, and the presence of a large number of Bulgarian volunteers in the Russian army."⁹³

In the Constitutional Assembly which took place in the medieval Bulgarian capital Tarnovo in 1879 and whose aim was to accept a constitution for the newly founded Bulgarian Principality, the presence of members, who were Robert College's graduates (four in number),⁹⁴ was of vital importance, as attested by Washburn in his memoir:

"The Assembly itself was unique, made up largely of peasants, many of them in their sheepskin clothes, and I think that there was no one in the assembly who knew anything about parliamentary law except the old students of Robert College, who were in force. There was not a member who had had any personal experience in civil government."⁹⁵

The presence of Robert College's graduates in the Provincial Assembly of Eastern Rumelia seems to have had been even bigger since according to Konstantin Josef Jireček's testimony, among its members there were "no graduates of a Russian school but more of them being from Robert College."⁹⁶ The above-mentioned article *Bulgarian Alumni of Robert College* points out that "The graduates of Robert College first taught the Bulgarians the principles of Parliamentary procedure."⁹⁷ The same article cites Washburn's words from his memoir: "The most important thing that we ever did for them was the educating of their young men to become leaders of their people at a time when there were very few Bulgarians who knew anything of civil government in a free state."⁹⁸ It is not surprising since amongst the educational institutions which the Bulgarians went to in pre-Liberation period Robert College seems to have been the only one, which provided classes in parliamentary law.

The above-mentioned article points out also that the Bulgarians “had great need of educated men for leaders and they found them in the graduates of Robert College who contributed very much to the founding of this new state” and it was true not only for the Bulgarian parliament, but also for the Bulgarian central and local government.

Since the newly established Bulgarian state had to make its political elite *ad hoc*⁹⁹ relatively a big proportion (12 percent) of the Bulgarian ministers during the period 1879-1915 were not graduates of universities but colleges and even secondary schools (i.e. gymnasias), among them students and graduates of Robert College.¹⁰⁰ Two prime ministers, Constantine Stoiloff (class of 1871) and Todor Ivantchoff (class of 1875), nine ministers, tens of city mayors and provincial governors, as well as diplomats were graduates of Robert College. Other three Bulgarian ministers studied at the college but did not finish its course of study. 11 percent (12 out of 108) of the Bulgarian ministers and prime ministers during the said period were students and graduates of Robert College (classes of the 1870s and 1880s, when the Bulgarian students and graduates prevailed over the other nationalities in the college) and they prevailed over those who graduated from other schools and colleges.¹⁰¹ As Ivan Ilchev points out the certificates given by the college were enough for their holders to have higher positions in the Bulgarian government.¹⁰²

Hence, if the period 1863 to 1890 could be termed the “Bulgarian period” in Robert College’s history, one can justifiably term the years 1879 to 1915 the “Robert College period” in Bulgarian history.

As for the political affiliation of the Robert College’s Bulgarian graduates, most of them who became ministers and prime ministers during the period 1879-1915 belonged to the liberal and democratic parties. As a matter of fact during that period the cabinets of the liberal/democratic parties were more than those of the conservative/people parties. Graduates of Robert College became ministers predominantly in the first decade of the twentieth century. It is worth mentioning that amongst the eight members of the Bulgarian liberal-democratic cabinet headed by Petko Karaveloff from March 4, 1901 through January 3, 1902 there were three graduates of Robert College, and namely Ivan Belinoff (class of 1876), Ivan Slaveykoff (class of 1871), and Alexander Ludskanoff (class of 1875). During his private visit to Sofia in December 1901 Washburn saw all the Bulgarian ministers, those who were graduates of the college including (although according to him they were four).¹⁰³

The private secretaries (*aid-de-camp*) of the Bulgarian rulers Alexander of Battenberg (1879-1886) and Ferdinand I (1887-1918) were alumni of Robert College: Svetoslav Taptchileshkoff (class of 1875), Marin Marinoff (class of 1876), Verban Nicoloff (class of 1876), and Ivan Exarchos (student in 1866-1867).¹⁰⁴ Washburn narrates in his memoir that during the visit of Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria to the college in 1896 he “made himself very agreeable to the Bulgarian students, and took afternoon tea at Kennedy Lodge, where he was kind enough to say that Robert College had been a nursery for Bulgarian statesmen and he hoped it would continue to be so...”¹⁰⁵ In his annual report for 1895-1896 (p. 11) Washburn repeats Prince Ferdinand’s words that “Robert College had been a nursery of Bulgarian statesmen” and concludes: “I can think of no other example in history of such a relationship between a college and a state as that which all the world recognizes as existing in this case and which was so gracefully and cordially acknowledged by Prince Ferdinand.”¹⁰⁶

Besides, the Robert College’s Bulgarian graduates tended to be Russophobe rather than Russophile. The attitude towards and relationship with Russia played an important role in the Bulgarian political life. Washburn attests, for instant, the following for the years 1888-1889:

“All the Bulgarian troubles came from Russia... Prince Alexander had been removed, but now Prince Ferdinand and Mr. Stambouloff blocked the way, supported by the great majority of the Bulgarian people... Murder and treason were patronized and paid by Russia, and it was pitiful to see how some really honest and patriotic men were deceived and won over to the belief that it was necessary for Bulgaria to sacrifice everything to please the Czar. Some of them were graduates of Robert College, although in general our alumni were loyal to Bulgaria rather than to the Czar.”¹⁰⁷

Conclusion

The foundation of Robert College in Istanbul in 1863 as a higher educational institution coincided with the process of Bulgarian emancipation from the Ottoman rule and with the transitional period from a traditional to a modern society in which education was considered to be of significant importance. Robert College’s theory of education and curriculum provided its students an opportunity to achieve knowledge and skills which were needed exactly in that historical moment. In other words, Robert College taught the Bulgarians the know-how of the civil

government. A significant part of the newly formed elite in post-Ottoman Bulgaria spent its schooling years at Robert College which made the college itself extremely popular among the Bulgarians and somewhat a hallmark.

A report by D. Atanasoff, entitled *Like Robert College* and published in the same issue of the above-mentioned *Newsletter* (1923), emphasizes exactly the same. He reports that the Bulgarian government had taken a decision to grant the American Board of Missionaries a piece of land near Sofia in order to remove the American School, founded in Samokov in 1860, nearer the cultural center of the country. The decision was presented to the Parliament and the records of its session on June 14, 1920, "reveal in most earnest way the prevailing sentiment toward American educational institutions." According to Atanasoff, the most striking evidence of this sentiment was the words "Like Robert College" of the then Bulgarian Prime Minister Alexander Stamboliyski, who by comparing this school with Robert College actually attested that in the Bulgarian public opinion Robert College had gained status of an unquestionable hallmark of high standard of education and excellence. The report concludes with the following remark:

"At that moment of recollection doubtless the Prime Minister pictured Bulgaria in the days long before her independence and recalling the past historical events he saw the spirit of Robert College watching, guiding and directing ... Americans have just cause to feel proud that Robert College gave to many of the leading Bulgarian citizens their education so that it has played a peculiar part in the making of the Bulgarian nation."¹⁰⁸

Appendix: Robert College's Bulgarian Students and Graduates (1864-1967)

Year	Students	Graduates	Year	Students	Graduates
1-1863/64			53-1915/16	55	2
2-1864/65	1		54-1916/17		1
3-1865/66	9		55-1917/18		1
4-1866/67	16		56-1918/19	19	6
5-1867/68	16	1	57-1919/20	34	3
6-1868/69	41	5	58-1920/21	34	4
7-1869/70	35		59-1921/22	21	1
8-1870/71	41	5	60-1922/23	35	1
9-1871/72	40	6	61-1923/24	53	2
10-1872/73	31	1	62-1924/25	72	2
11-1873/74	43	5	63-1925/26	102	2
12-1874/75	45	7	64-1926/27	91	4
13-1875/76	33	7	65-1927/28	62	3
14-1876/77	42	5	66-1928/29	56	2
15-1877/78	50	3	67-1929/30	57	4
16-1878/79	54	6	68-1930/31	37	5
17-1879/80	77	4	69-1931/32	53	6
18-1880/81	89	9	70-1932/33		5
19-1881/82	105	5	71-1933/34		6
20-1882/83	110	5	72-1934/35		3
21-1883/84	91	14	73-1935/36		2
22-1884/85	71	9	74-1936/37		3
23-1885/86	71	12	75-1937/38		3
24-1886/87	70	13	76-1938/39		
25-1887/88	60	16	77-1939/40		
26-1888/89	52	6	78-1940/41		
27-1889/90	45	3	79-1941/42		
28-1890/91	41	7	80-1942/43	5	
29-1891/92	52	4	81-1943/44	2	
30-1892/93	60	6	82-1944/45	3	
31-1893/94	44	6	83-1945/46	4	
32-1894/95	36	6	84-1946/47		
33-1895/96	37	3	85-1947/48		

ORLIN SABEV (ORHAN SALIH)

34-1896/97	38	5	86-1948/49		
35-1897/98	49	6	87-1949/50		
36-1898/99	45	3	88-1950/51	5	
37-1899/1900	39	2	89-1951/52	7	1
38-1900/01	34	4	90-1952/53	17	1
39-1901/02	29	2	91-1953/54		
40-1902/03	28	7	92-1954/55	12	
41-1903/04	23	1	93-1955/56		1
42-1904/05	34	1	94-1956/57		3
43-1905/06	37		95-1957/58		1
44-1906/07	39	2	96-1958/59		1
45-1907/08	54	4	97-1959/60		
46-1908/09	67	4	98-1960/61		
47-1909/10	70	3	99-1961/62		
48-1910/11	68	4	100-1962/63		
49-1911/12	57	7	101-1963/64		1
50-1912/13	65	2	102-1964/65		
51-1913/14	64	6	103-1965/66		
52-1914/15		7	104-1966/67		1

NOTES

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THE HOLY GRAIL AND THE PROMISED LAND: CONSTRUCTION OF THE RUSSIAN GREATNESS THROUGH THE BALKANS AND THE BLACK SEA REGION

1. Methodology

The Balkans and the Black Sea region have drawn the attention of international community as troubled European periphery. The war in Bosnia, Kosovo, Abkhazia and Ossetia draw Europe to seriously consider the two regions as the source of various threats for Europe. In some regards, European identity was reproduced and sustained in dealing with the problems coming from the Balkans and the Black Sea region. Post-modernity and European values were reproduced in the juxtaposition with pre-modernity, embodied in underdevelopment, traditionalism and hatreds persistent in these two regions. In addition, Balkans and the Black Sea region have another significant aspect. The urgent problems coming from Europe forced Russia and the European Union to engage in an interaction aimed at dealing with the conflicts that broke out here.

As much as Europe used the two regions to construct its own identity, Russia has long used two regions to sustain its own specific identity. The present paper sets out to look at the question what role was attributed to the both regions in the Russian identity, how it was constructed and how it was related to Europe. The paper employs the methodology of discourse analysis in the study of the main texts, which define Russia's self-perception as an international actor. The paper will particularly look into the question what role is attributed in this discourse to the Black Sea region and the Balkans.

In order to reconstruct the dominant discourses underpinning the key elements of Russian identity and linking them to those prevailing historical ideas which formed an intellectual background that defined how the Russian society and policy-makers perceived Russia, Black Sea region and the Balkans, the present paper will employ discursive analysis of

the most widely-read texts that introduced the notions of Russia, Europe, Balkans, and Greatness and described relations between these notions.

In order to identify the pool of ideas on which the Russian people drew their understanding about the international affairs, this chapter focuses on the intellectual trajectory, which an average Russian citizen and elite member would go through. The reconstruction of these ideas will be done through the reading of school and university text books on Russian and Soviet foreign policy and international history, and historical novels that were highly popular in the USSR in the period of 1960.

The paper will analyze texts that were produced, circulated and consumed in the 1960's. The specific time period is selected because it was in this period when, in the aftermath of Stalin's rule, Russian literature and history undertook an attempt to reconsider its past and new books on the history of Russia and the Soviet Union were written. It was in this period that the generation of Russians, who were to become active citizens, experts and policy-makers in the new independent Russia, arrived at their understanding of such concepts as the World, the Soviet Union, Russia, Europe and Great Powerhood.

Turning to the key historic texts, which have been instrumental in shaping the understanding of the Russian 'Self' and Russia's 'Others', attention is focused on the standard textbooks which were the fundamental sources of the information under Soviet rule. Instruction in schools under the Soviet education system was heavily regulated production and reproduction of knowledge. The strictly defined school curricula, a single framework for analysis, strictly drawn up bibliographies and one official textbook officially approved by the top Communist leadership, published by the state publishing houses and supplied to all schools, created the environment in which the understanding of international reality was shaped.

In the case of high schools, such a source of authoritative information about Russia and the USSR was the 3-volume text-book *Istoriya SSSR* (History of the USSR) written by a team of senior history professors and edited by academician Anna Pankratova¹. In 1947, Pankratova was awarded the highest prize for intellectuals and artists – the Stalin Premium (1947). Her book was a primary source of information internalized by 15-17 year old Soviet youngsters. Two other examples of authoritative texts are the 10-volume *Vsemirnaya Istoriya* (History of the World), which was prepared by four special research institutes of the Soviet Academy of Sciences and published under the umbrella of academy between

1955-1965, and 3-volume *Istoriya Diplomatii* (History of Diplomacy) prepared by a number of senior academics, edited by the very senior Soviet diplomat and pedagogue Vladimir Potemkin and published by the State-Economical Publishing House in 1941-1945². These voluminous works were source of authoritative conceptual information for school teachers, university students and professors and, thus, significantly affected the mindset of the Soviet intellectuals and mind-makers (journalists, university professors, school teachers).

Of the three founders of the historiography of the Russian state of the 19th-20th centuries – Sergey Soloviev, Mikhail Karamzin and Vladimir Kluchevskiy - the present paper considers only Sergei Soloviev, who was frequently quoted and suggested for reading in the faculties of history during the Soviet period³. Karamzin's works, according to Pankratova's textbook was a reflection of the feudal mindset of its author and was not suggested for quoting and reading⁴. Soloviev on the other hand was considered an authoritative scientist although he was professor of Moscow University in Russian Empire. His fundamental work *Istoriya Rossii s Drevneishikh vremen: v piātnadtsāti knigakh* (*History of Russia since the Oldest Times: in fifteen books*) was republished by the Soviet government between 1959-1966. Although the Soviet editors of the new version of Soloviev's work stressed that Soloviev's bourgeoisie methodology was alien to the Soviet reader, they still couldn't but acknowledge the amount of interesting and necessary material collected in his works⁵.

Finally, the paper turns to Russian fiction which has always played an important role in the construction of Russian identities. The paper therefore focuses on one of the most influential and widely-read Soviet writer of historic novels Valentin Pikul. Pikul was pronounced the absolute best-selling author in his category. According to surveys conducted by the All-Union Library of Foreign Literature, the sale of his works reached more than million items.⁶ Some other sources range the overall sales of his historic novels from 20 to 500 million items over the period from 1954 to the mid-1990s⁷. Even 20 years after his death, Pikul's books are still being republished, uploaded and circulated in the Internet. Russian TV has produced and screened several action movies and TV series based on Pikul's novels. Other indications of the influence of Pikul's ideas on Russian society and its elite can be seen in the fact that the Ministry of Defence established a special Pikul prize for the best military-patriotic literature works. Several military vessels of the Baltic and the Black Sea Fleet of Russia were named after him. No other writer has received such

an honour. In addition, several civilian ships, streets, libraries and even a planet bear Valentin Pikul's name.

Pikul's first widely popular historical novel "Bayazet" was published in 1961.⁸ The novel describes the heroic deeds of the Russian regiment operating in the Caucasus which took over and defended a strategically located Turkish fortress, Bayazet, during the Russian-Turkish war of 1877-1878. The paper studies how the novel complements or challenges the textbooks identity discourses.

All the abovementioned textbooks and works vary in the time, scope and methodology. However, their reiterated messages construct a certain social reality and narratives for individual or social existence. The key discourses produced in these books provide the basis for Russia's special role in international relations. Rather than the ideological basis of the Soviet textbooks, the focus here is on the representation of Russia, its Greatness and its relationship with Europe as well as the Black Sea and the Balkans. The paper will look into the discourses which define these representations, how they are reproduced and/or mutually neutralized.

2. Construction of Russia through the Balkans and the Black Sea Region

2.1. Black Sea as the Promised Land

2.1.1. Final point of the North-South movement

The construction of the Black Sea as Promised Land is taking place through numerous description of the region in teleological terms. One of the most first examples is the construction of the region as an entity in the movement from the North to the South. Any historical introduction of the Russian or Soviet lands has the same feature - it goes from North to South, it starts in the North and ends in the South. When Pankratova or Soloviev introduce the big Eurasian plain, they start from the North (the Baltic region) and end up in the South - at the Black Sea coast⁹. Later descriptions of such a North-South axis also reproduce this direction of movement. Thus, the detailed description of the Dnepr - Black Sea part of the famous historic roots from "Varangians into Greeks" reproduces this North-South movement. The legendary Viking leaders came from the North. As long as they were ruling from the North Slavic centre of Novgorod, they were simply regional rulers. But once they moved to the

South they founded the Medieval Slavic state and became rulers of this new Slavic Power.

The concept of the North has a significantly positive connotation in Russian history. The North is linked to the ideas of self-improvement and self-making in Russia. The Slavs invite the Vikings from the North to come to rule their dispersed and warring lands. The Vikings come and create the Medieval Slavic state. Other challenges from the North are successfully faced once and for all when the Swedes and the Teutonian Knights are crushed by Alexander Nevsky in 1240 and in 1242, respectively (those are mentioned only briefly by Pankratova)¹⁰. The Northern War which Peter the Great waged with Sweden, drives him to modernize the army, the fleet and industry in general. As a result, Russia eventually crushes Sweden, gains access to the Baltic Sea and (according to Iver Neumann¹¹) became an Empire and a Great Power. But according to the Russian textbooks as the result of the victory in the Northern War Russia again became a strong *sea power*, which attested only to growing power and strength of the Russian state¹². Obviously, some other texts suggest that Russia had crushed the Swedish Great Powerhood in the Northern War these events are mentioned as a prelude for Russia's entry into Great Power club. To be accomplished this prelude was to be succeeded by Russia's victories in the South¹³. After that decisive period, no further grave challenges to Russia emerged from the North, at least according to the textbooks.

The arrival to the Promised Land in the South to be more dramatic. The concept of the South is constructed as in contrast to the North. It carries stronger elements of uncertainty for most periods of Russian history. On the one hand, the South, and the Black Sea region in particular, is of higher significance than the North for the history of the Russian territory and culture – as the locus, for example, of World history for Russia, Christianity etc. that are analysed below. On the other hand, the Black Sea region is also an arena of regular challenges to and the site of failures of the pre-Slavic, Slavic, Russian and even the Soviet state.

Scythians and Kievan Rus failed to repel the nomadic tribes. The Russian Tsardom could not successfully neutralize the Crimean Tatars for many centuries. Even when the successful periods of the Russian expansion southwards are described, there is always an element of uncertainty. Peter the Great fails to protect Orthodoxy in Constantinople and his Azov campaigns *“did not lead to the completion of the war. Turkey had a strong fleet and continued to overlord the Black Sea”*¹⁴. In the 18th and 19th century the Russian Empire was either defeated by

Turks or was deprived of its conquests by European powers. The Soviet Union failed to establish "normal" relations with Romania, Yugoslavia, Albania and faced threats from the USA and NATO via Turkey. Even when Russia failed in the North, it was mostly because the North managed to manipulate the threat from the South, as when, for example, the Swedes and Poles defeated Russia in the Livonian War having allied themselves with Crimean Tatars and Turkey in the late 16th century. And this situation is repeated in later stages of interaction between Russia and Europe. This way, the element of uncertainty in the South is reinforced. These failures look even more dramatic because they imply that Russia or its various historic embodiments (Scythians, Slavic tribes, Kievan Rus, Russian Tsardom, Russian Empire, USSR) failed to defend the very regions from where they had originated and where they had established themselves.

The course of Russian history can be viewed as unfolding along an axis from North (positive, certainty) to South (negative, uncertainty). Russia grows and develops by moving from the North to absorb the South. This endless movement has another important feature: it is constructed as an example of troubled "organic" development. Although Russia's expansion to the South is presented as a natural process, a necessary stage in the development of the Russian state, this expansion has actually never been successful. It encountered a number of failures and setbacks, which eventually drains the power of the Russian Empire. The country had to retreat to its previous borders and start to concentrate again, to use the words of the Russian Chancellor Gorchakov uttered after the Congress of Berlin where Russia lost some of the achievements it gained in the Russian-Turkish War.

Important features of this movement are the ever increasing stakes and costs involved. It begins with the peaceful co-existence of pre-Slavic and Slavic tribes, continues as the growing need of Kievan Rus to expand and defend itself; and, subsequently it manifests itself in an organic, urgent need to gain access to the Black and Mediterranean Seas to accomplish the historic mission of Slavic and Orthodox liberation from the Ottoman Empire. The stakes become higher after unsuccessful raids and the death of one specific leader, Svyatoslav. They grow into international humiliation of Russia in the Crimean War, with the exhaustion of state resources, rebellions and finally collapse of the Russian state in the First World War. So the South appears as an unattainable mission, as well as a compelling task and destination of Russia, the place to which it always

strives and aspires, but which it never quite manages to reach, to conquer or to achieve.

2.1.2. Holy Grail: the gate to the World and European history

The Black Sea and the Balkans are constructed as Holy Grail is also constructed when the textbooks describe the Black Sea region as a unique and sometime *key locus* where Russian history is connected to key phenomena of world and European history. Textbooks have proposed such a connection is constructed by asserting that all the important moments of world history have their analogues in the Black Sea area, starting with the first camps of primitive people, the first agricultural villages, the first cattle-breeding settlements or the first Bronze slave-owning states discovered in the Caucasus, Transcaucasia or Crimea¹⁵. Describing the first ancient *Urartu Kingdom* at territory of the USSR in Transcaucasia as well as the contacts between Urartu and the Greek world or Assyrians, the *History of Diplomacy* explicitly states that “*through Urartu the history of the nations of the world is organically linked to the past of the nations of the Soviet Union*”¹⁶.

This discourse is repeated by the pre-Soviet historian Soloviev who described the Black Sea plain as a unique point of contact between civilization and barbarity. Pankratova repeats this thesis when she describes the Eastern Black Sea region – Transcaucasia, i.e. Georgia and Armenia – as the locus of a clash between Europe and Asia, represented by the Roman Empire vs. Persia, or the Byzantine Empire vs. Persia¹⁷. The notions of Europe and Asia are linked in relations of equivalence through the corresponding opposites, such as settlers vs. nomads, rivers vs. steppes, civilization vs. barbarity, or courage vs. cruelty¹⁸. Russia, either through direct statements (as in Soloviev’s works) or through its alignment with suppressed nations could establish relations of equivalence with Europe and civilization:

Crowds of nomadic people conquer the deltas of the rivers Volga, Don and Dnepr... Eventually farming tribes of European origin settle on the banks of Dnepr...But Asia does not seize to send predatory hordes, which want to live at the expense of a settled population...The history of the latter is defined by its permanent fight with the steppe barbarians...In Russian history these periods of fights are marked as follow: from the first half of the XIth century to the middle of the XIIIth century – there are no definite successes in either side...From the 40s of the XIIIth century until the end

of the XIVth century Asians as represented by Mongols succeed. From the end of the XVth century Europe represented by Russia is taking over...¹⁹

The same discourse is reproduced when Pankratova describes other later states in the Caucasus - Colchis, Iberia and Albania²⁰ which were first to adopt Christianity in the third century from Saint Nino of Cappadocia who arrived from Constantinople²¹. With the Christianisation of the region and the establishment of regular trade with Europe, the clash between the local population and the Asian tyrannies (Arabs and Turks) is then represented as symbolic of the clash between Europe and Asia.

Although the key mode of interaction with Europe in the Medieval Ages flows mainly through the conflict with the Livonian Order, Sweden and Poland, the description of the international position of Moscow is again linked to the South. The references to the dealing with South conclude the sections devoted to the question of the foreign policy. It was through the Black Sea that Russian established trade relations with the Venetian Republic, Genoa and Naples²². It was again through the dynastic marriage with the neice of the last Byzantine Emperor, Sophia Paleolog, that the ruler of the Russian State Ivan III could centralize his power²³ and claim the role of the Third Rome²⁴.

Even in the period of the Napoleonic Wars, the Black Sea and Mediterranean was represented as the link between Russia and world politics. Although most of the battles between Russia and Napoleon took place in Europe or in Russia, the textbooks do not omit to describe the glorious victories of the Russian squadron commanded by Admiral Ushakov as it conquered the French stronghold on Corfu Island and landed in Italy to support the national liberation movement there²⁵. The Black Sea was the place where Russia aspired to special status in international relations. In this effort it challenged, defeated and was in turn defeated by Turkey and Europe. It acquired a vital symbolism, a Russian odyssey that required it, again and again, to engage in conflict with Europe. According to the textbooks, Russia even engaged in WWI because *it considered that the road towards Constantinople lay through Berlin, i.e. through the destruction of the German Empire*²⁶.

The Black Sea became a place where the most significant developments in Russian history had taken place. It is a place where Russia aspired to a better future and self-transformation. The famous Decembrist uprising of pro-European Russian officers took place both in Saint Petersburg and in south of the Empire. Most of the popular uprisings and the movement of

kozaks in the Russian Empire mentioned in the books take place in the Black Sea region. In the early 20th century the revolutionary movement took place in the Black Sea as well as in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. The mutiny in Sebastopol headed by Captain Pyotr Shmidt was the first attempt of the army to demand liberal reforms from the Tsars in the 20th century. In the description of numerous strikes in the Russian Empire special attention was paid to especially intensive workers' strikes, peasant insurgencies and the Revolution of 1903-1905 which all took place in the Black Sea provinces of Russia, or involved the Black Sea fleet, the Caucasus and Transcaucasia²⁷.

The representation of the Black Sea region as an existential extreme for Russia was reproduced in the description of the defeat of the first Russian revolution. The description of repressions and reactionary revenge (taking the forms of Jewish pogroms, arrests and assaults against workers' leaders) in Odessa were summarised by quoting Lenin that false *reactionary Russia [Czarist government] ridiculed itself not only in the sight of Europe, but also in Asia*²⁸. In the description of the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, the Black Sea region was represented as the locus where the clash between Russia and imperialist Europe took place. It was in the Black Sea region that the true, Soviet Russia created a true Europe by turning the French occupying troops in Odessa into revolutionaries²⁹.

Thus, the Black Sea is an important link between Russian and World and European history either because it is the place of a direct historical interaction of Russia or because it is a locus of important events that can be considered analogues of European benchmarks. But there is also another important link in the descriptions provided by the Russian textbooks – the link between the Black Sea and the Balkans.

2.2. Black Sea and its link to Balkans

2.2.1. Ways of construction of the regions

A study of the above mentioned texts helps to identify several ways in which the Balkans and the Black Sea regions are constructed. First and most noticeable is the frequent mention of contacts and borrowings between the two regions. In fact one might argue that the Black Sea and the Balkans were intertwined with each other when both these regions were constructed. In early references to some parts of the Black Sea coast, the Northern Black Sea area (*Severnoe prichernomorie*) in particular is

used in the context of close contacts with Ancient Greece³⁰. This pattern is repeated in descriptions of close interaction between the ancient Transcaucasian states and Byzantine and in the description of Greek colonisation of the Northern Black Sea region and Crimea. Eventually we find that the Black Sea region is constructed out of four sub-regions – Caucasus, Crimean, the Northern Black Sea coast and the Azov Sea.

The next discursive move is the construction of a part of the Black Sea coast as part of a different region – the Balkans. This feature can be identified in the descriptions of contacts between the Slavs and Byzantine and the Bulgarian Kingdom. When the textbooks describe contacts between the Kiev Principality and the Bulgarian Kingdom or Byzantine, the latter states are never described as the Black Sea although they cover a major part of the Western and South Black Sea coast. The major points of conflict between Kiev and these states are about Black Sea trade and navigation routes. But the fact that the major counterparts of the Kievan Rus are constructed as the Balkan or Danube countries turns their interaction from bilateral into an inter-regional relations. Once Byzantium is constructed as the Balkan and European state its relations with Rus are constructed as intra-regional Black Sea affairs, but also as the relations between Rus and the Balkans, Rus and Europe. This is how, Black Sea politics opens for the Slavs the door to World history and to European geography. In this way Black Sea politics goes beyond the Black Sea.

The same discursive move can be identified centuries later if we analyse the same “forgotten” parts of the Black Sea region. In the Pankratova textbook, for example, Russia is mentioned as a Black Sea power whereas Turkey just as an Asian power that could impose its control over the Black Sea³¹. Bulgaria and Romania are two Balkan countries on the Black Sea but the studied textbooks mention them predominantly as Balkan rather than Black Sea nations. The exclusion of Bulgaria and Romania from the Black Sea region, and inclusion of these countries into the Balkan complex, leads to the construction of the Balkans and the Black Sea regions as two adjacent entities linked together through various commonalities, e.g. shared destiny, common threats or common missions.

Linking the Black Sea and the Balkans through a joint destiny and effort is more flexible and makes for a stronger discourse. It is more flexible because it allows constructing Black Sea politics in several ways. Any Russian victory in the Black Sea can be constructed as part of the Russian-Turkish conflict and used to sustain Russian Greatness. At the same time any failures or victories in the Russian-Turkish wars can be

constructed as a part of a joint effort of Russia and the Balkan nations. The discourse of joint effort constructs Black Sea politics and the Balkans as two separate, but mutually-justifying agencies. The discourse of liberation fight of the Balkan nations fighting together with Russia against Turkey attaches to the Balkan nations a greater agency and thereby justifies Russia's Balkan ambitions, and retrospectively also justifies Russia's Black Sea expansion.

2.2.2. The shared origin and source of identity and inspiration

The fact that one part of the Black Sea region is constructed as the Balkans (i.e. Bulgaria and Romania) helps the texts to link the two regions through the discourse of source of identity. The Balkans are constructed as an 'Ancient Ego' and source of identity for Russia. Russia was created according to a Balkan vision. Slavs were converted into Christianity by Byzantine. They received their alphabet from Byzantine³². The first international treaty signed by the Kiev Principality was with Byzantine. By getting married to Byzantine princesses, Slavs could increase their status to that of a state equal to other European states. With the Third Rome concept they use Byzantine as a reference point to claim their special position in international affairs³³. Even the Vikings came to Russia after having enjoyed the achievement of civilization in the Mediterranean.

The Balkans and Russia share the same destiny: tragedy. They are both victims of Asia - Russia a victim of Barbaric Asia (the Tatars), the Balkans conquered by the Ottoman Empire. Russia was luckier in being able to overthrow the Barbarians. But now it has to help its Ancient Ego. This heroic liberation movement as a source of inspiration for True Russia was manifest by the public support through Slavic Committees. This thesis was repeated in Pikul's writings³⁴. Sometimes the lives of the Balkan heroes become a role model and destiny for Russia. Russian officers serving in the Caucasus dreamed about death as beautiful as the death of the Balkan heroes.

Both Russia and the Balkans has shared victimhood. As much as Russia has to sacrifice its soldiers to satisfy or save European powers³⁵, so the description of the Balkan wars reproduces the link between Russia and the Balkans through describing the Balkan states as the one-million-bayonet-reserve for the Entente whereas the national liberation movement of the Balkan peoples was used *by the imperialist powers – France and Germany*³⁶. This shared victimhood leads to military partnership as a natural survival strategy, and adds more legitimacy to

Russian stirring up revolts in the Balkans in order to assist its expansion to the Black Sea. In fact the first reference to a military partnership between Russia and the Balkans is articulated as an urgent need for Russia. In 1710, trying to repel Turkish and Tatar invasions in South Russian lands and Ukraine, *Peter the Great tried to bring to his side Christian and Slavic nations of the Balkan Peninsula. Manifestos of Peter the Great, circulated in Serbia, called for a revolt against the Turkish yoke, and thirty thousand rebels were ready to join Russians... Russian troops under Peter's command marched to the Moldovan borders*³⁷. Thus, Russia's involvement in the Balkans was caused by the gravity of the threat in the Black Sea region. A huge discursive field was opened up when the joint military partnership is launched.

2.2.3. The link through battles and peace treaties

Given the number of descriptions of Russian-Turkish wars in the textbooks, battles constitute probably the most powerful linking element between the Black Sea and the Balkans. The regions are fused into a single strategic space by numerous descriptions of military actions at the three fronts of Crimea, Transcaucasia and Danube³⁸ and are added to by the description of parallel successes of the Russian navy in the Mediterranean³⁹. The pantheon of heroes also reinforces the link. The commanders of the Russian armies and its fleet in this war were Count Alexey Orlov *Chesmenskiy* (Chesme Bay - Mediterranean), Count Rumiantsev *Zadunayskiy* (Trans-Danubian – Balkans), and Prince Grigoriy Potemkin *Tavricheskiy* (Tavria - Crimea). The peace treaty of Kuchuk Kainarji which concluded the war reinforced the link between the Black Sea and the Balkans⁴⁰.

Russia gained lands on the Northern Black Sea coast, in the Crimea and Caucasus, received the right of free passage through the straits and established its protectorate over Moldova and Walachia.⁴¹ Some 13 years later, the nexus between the Black Sea region and the Balkans was reinforced by parallel references to the siege of the Turkish Black Sea ports of Ochakov and Ismail which were followed by the victories at Rimnik and Focsani in Romania. The title of Rimnikskiy was bestowed on the Russian Commander A. Suvorov for his victory. The Russian fleet first defeated the Turkish fleet in the Northern Black Sea at Ochakov and Ismail and then close to the Rumelian coast at Cape Kaliakria in Bulgaria (Black Sea but

imaginary Balkans). These actions help to recreate the link between Black Sea and the Balkans in most descriptions of the Russian-Turkish wars.⁴²

This link is fixed through a mechanism of reverse causality introduced in the description of the Crimean war. It was not only the victories and expansion, but also the simultaneous defeats and losses that linked the Black Sea and the Balkans regions into one strategic complex. The passage from the description of the Paris Treaty illustrates this well:

Russia was deprived of the right to maintain military vessels in the Black Sea or hold fortresses on the Black Sea coast. South Bessarabia was given to Turkey... Serbia, Moldova and Walachia were subjected to the protection of European powers. The Dardanelles and the Black Sea were proclaimed neutral and open for merchant shipping of all countries... Tsarist Russia lost its commanding role in international politics⁴³.

In the descriptions of WWI, the link between the two regions is again reinforced in references to the battles in Tarnovo (Bulgaria) and the shelling of Odessa (Black Sea), the conquest of the Turkish fortresses Sarakamysh, Erzurum, and Trapesund with the successful offensive of Russian troops in the Carpathian Mountains and Hungary⁴⁴. In his novel *"Iz Tupika"*, Pikul adds to this link description of the Russian fleet fighting in the Mediterranean, Russian troops being stationed on the Thessaloniki front and the Russian army in action in Ukraine⁴⁵.

Another Pikul's novel *"Bayazet"* endorses the discursive construction of the link. First, the link between the Balkans and the Black Sea region is constructed in a dialogue between an experienced commander of the Russian unit operating in Transcaucasia, and colonel Khvoshchinskiy who introduces Lieutenant Karabanov to the local state-of-affairs by saying:

The Balkans will backfire on us here... We are like a patch now. The more Turkish troops we will pull here the easier it will be for Gurko and Skobelev [the Russian Generals commanding the troops in the Balkans] in Bulgaria.⁴⁶

This link is repeatedly reproduced with absolute priority given to the Caucasian front. Russian troops in the Caucasus were not only saving Christians in Transcaucasia, they were simultaneously supporting the noble cause of the Slavs in the Balkans and helping the Russian troops in the Balkans. In addition, the Russian troops and their heroism in the Black Sea region were the source of Russia's strength in the Balkans whereas

the Balkans represented a challenge and threat for Russia in the Black Sea region. Russian troops operating in the Caucasus were fighting in much more difficult conditions than their comrades in the Balkans. The gravity of the challenge and significance of the mission is stressed when Russian soldiers are quoted to be much closer to the Sultan than their comrades in the Balkans who probably did not even know about the suffering of the Russian troops in Transcaucasia⁴⁷. The link between the Balkans and the Black Sea region is reinforced even by accidental remarks of second rank figures, who state that it does not matter whether to die for the Slavs in Bulgaria or in Transcaucasia.⁴⁸

With the identification of the discourses linking the Black Sea and the Balkans into one strategic region, we shall now turn to analyses of what role these two regions played in shaping the Russian identity and its relations to the rest of the world.

3. The concept of “Power” and the Black Sea

The concept of “Power” in the intellectual trajectory does not appear immediately as in the combination “Great Power”. It went through an evolution linked to one set of signifiers to another. Some of the meanings may vanish, some may remain unchanged and some may transform into something new. This section studies the evolution of the meaning of the term “Power” in terms of international actor-ness and identifies the meaning which remains embedded in the term Great Power. The significance of the Black Sea in this concept will also be studied.

3.1. Inception of the concept

The Soviet texts construct a clear hierarchy of social organisation. In the hierarchy of the forms of social organisation, the term *state* was higher than the term *country*, with the key difference resting in the ability to conquer and expand. At the initial stage of the development Urartu is referred to as a country. Later on, when it reaches the peak of its might it has become a state. The concept of state is then linked to the concept of *power*. University textbooks use the term power with reference to the ancient states that had strong military organization and expanded at the expense of other countries, for example Power of Schumer and Akkad,⁴⁹ Babylon, Chet and Assyrian, Egypt Military Power, Persian Military Power,

Power of Colonial Carthage,⁵⁰ Power of Genghis-Khan, Mogul or Moravian Power,⁵¹ etc. The same criteria apply to the Slavic tribes. As long as the Slavic tribes lived mostly in dispersed principalities they were referred to as Slavs or Slavic tribes. But once Varangian warlords expanded the power of Kiev over several neighbouring tribes and named themselves Great Russian Prince (*Velikiy Kniaz Russkiy*), the textbooks qualify the new entity as the Kievan state⁵² or *Power of Ryurikovich (Derzhava Ryurikovichei)*.⁵³ This important element equates the concept of statehood with the concept of power.

Thus, the concept of power is linked to the ability to expand. Only in the case of Kievan Rus expansionism is represented as urgent and a matter of survival for the Slavic tribes in order to repel the raids of nomads. Expansion brings about the creation of a myth about the reunification of Slavic principalities which was used centuries later. Although there is no mention of any pre-existing state or union of all the Slavic principalities or tribes, which were once dispersed and needed to be reunited, the conquests of Oleg are represented as the natural and inevitable way to form a state. More than that, the expansion is described as the only way to face a fatal challenge and to survive. In the same logic, Oleg's successors Kievan princes Igor, Oleg, Svyatoslav, etc. are judged by this standard, namely by the capacity to incorporate new Slavic territories into the Kievan state⁵⁴. This ability allows Russian and Soviet historians to elevate the Medieval Russian state to the level of European Empires. They compare these deeds of Vikings to the creation of Empire of Charlemagne which raised Europe's gravest concerns.⁵⁵

Subsequent descriptions of how the lack of unity among the Slavic princes lead to the decline of Kievan Rus and its enslavement by the dispersed Mongol and Tatar tribes united by Chinghiz Khan⁵⁶ fixes the causal mechanism: *unification / expansion => powerhood => existence*. If a state is not a power and is unable to expand into adjoining areas or to unify tribes, it will fall prey to the threat from the South⁵⁷. At the same time, the idea of unified lands is introduced as elements of the fragility of the Kievan state. The concept of unification and greatness is linked to the concept of decentralisation and demise in a long description of how uneven development and personal ambitions led to decentralisation of the country, its decline and finally its enslavement by the Mongol Power.⁵⁸ The linking of the above terms takes place in subsequent descriptions of a new *Russian state* under the aegis of Moscow Principality,⁵⁹ Ivan the Terrible,⁶⁰ Peter the Great and Catherine the Great. Over time the two notions were

linked not only logically, but also phonetically – the term *velikoderzhavie* (great powerhood) sounds similar to the term *samoderzhavie* (absolute power, absolutism). The importance of the Black Sea in this process is indicated through regular Slav raids on the Black Sea and to Byzantine, as well as to the lower Danube.

3.2. Russia - sea power

The next stage of the evolution of a *Powerhood concept* for Russia was the linking of the idea of power with that of access to the seas. This type of expansion is again justified as an organic need for trade and urgent challenge linked to spatial constructions of Russia as an entity trying to break the restraints which inhibited its development, as *Turkey locked Russia in the Black Sea and inhibited Russia's Black Sea trade*⁶¹ and did not want Russia to become a **sea power with a strong fleet in the Azov Sea**⁶². The question of maritime access is seen as part of international politics. The struggle between the major European states and Russia takes place around access to the sea, both the Baltic and the Black Sea. Turkey was assisted by other *sea powers – England, Holland as well as the Roman Empire who were interested in weakening Russia, to tie its strength in the South*.⁶³

The significance of access to the sea is once again stressed in the description of the success of Peter the Great who after the conquest of Azov allowed Russia to claim a leading position among the European states.⁶⁴ The concept of sea power was linked to the concept of an outstanding great power. The intermediate stage was the ability to reform itself as Peter the Great achieved. Once Russia is a Black Sea power the concept undergoes certain changes. The concept of a Black Sea power does not only mean current access to the sea, but retrospectively it is used to claim the right for usage of the Black Sea transit routes. Seventy-five years after another long war with Russia, Turkey opened the straits of Bosphorus and Dardanelles and the same statement is pronounced again: *this peace treaty turned Russia into the Black Sea power*.⁶⁵

3.3. Russia - Black Sea-born Great European hyper-power

Russia's quest for Black Sea powerhood acquired a momentum of its own - the future of the Ottoman Empire becomes the subject of discussions between the leading European states. The concept of **Great European**

power is introduced in the textbooks as an outcome of the Russian policies in the Black Sea region.⁶⁶ Russia's Great Powerhood and other Great Powers are born in the Black Sea. Although subsequent descriptions of British and French intrigues remind the readers about the systemic constraints on Russia's Great Powerhood, there is another element which generates the discourse of the exceptionality of the Russian Powerhood. Russia is constructed as the **only power** which can help the nations of Transcaucasia to avoid extermination by Iran and Turkey.⁶⁷ Within the club of Great Powers Russia has special status – it can do something that other Great Powers can not. It is the strongest of the strongest and also *primus inter pares*. Special abilities allow special responsibilities and special rights. Russia's Great Powerhood is a mission rather than a privilege, a burden rather than a special right.

The discourse of Russia's exceptionality is reinforced by the descriptions of Napoleonic wars. The fact that Napoleon had to go into war against Russia because without crushing Russia Napoleon could not aspire to world hegemony,⁶⁸ reinforces the discourse about the exceptional role of Russia in international politics. The victory of Russia over Napoleon is proof that Russia gained the commanding role in international politics. Russia's feeling of superiority is complemented by a derogatory attitude towards the congress of Vienna, where *European powers, which under disguise of restoration of legitimacy were redrawing the map of Europe whilst disregarding the national interests of Europe's peoples*.⁶⁹ Having defeated France and having encouraged a wave of revolutions around Europe, Russia feels too strong to respect diplomatic bargains and negotiations. It is described as the European hyper-power capable of unilateral action. Russia's Great Powerhood at the peak of its glory is its capability of unilateral action. It is not arrogance of power, but it is the humble pride of a crusader.

In the mid 19th century Russia's Black Sea powerhood was challenged. The next stage that Russia would explore in its Black Sea Power trajectory was to impose control on the Black Sea straits. This step was justified by its Black Sea power status and strategy to create such a regime which would not allow hostile states to use the Straits for attacks on the Russian territories in the Black Sea region.⁷⁰ The fact that these attempts were opposed by England and France reinforced the discourse of immoral Western Great European Powers. Their policies are not constructed through regular balance of power considerations, but as a deliberate anti-Russian policy aimed at blocking Russia's access to the East and to the Mediterranean.⁷¹

Such an interpretation of British policies elevated its status from spoil-sport to a major threat for the Russian Black Sea coast. The Black Sea becomes an arena of the clash between the Great European Powers. The Crimean war demonstrates that Russia is no longer a hyper-power. The fact that Russia was defeated in one Crimean War is constructed as *Tsarist Russia lost its commanding role in international politics*.⁷²

For Pankratova, the ability to control the Black Sea Straits, Black Sea fleet, Black Sea fortifications and the recognized right of other European powers for protection of the Balkans province were major attributes of Great European Power for Russia. When Russia loses these attributes of European power, it also loses its commanding role in international politics. The web of meaning fixed new terms around the concept of Great Powerhood: control over Balkans and the Black Sea straits is linked to the notion of European power, European power is linked to the ability to command in international politics. The Crimean war shows that when Russia seeks to realise its Black Sea powerhood dream, it endangers its status as European hyper-power and indeed the very existence of the Russian state.⁷³

4. Conclusions

Although most of regional experts and researchers on Russia agree that the Black Sea has been an important element in creating the Russian identity, most of them still referred predominantly to the era of Catherine the Great or the Russian-Turkish War of the 19th century. A closer look to the Russian textbooks allows a different conclusion. The Black Sea has a much more complex and therefore a much more significant meaning for the Russian identity than just a glorious Imperial past. As different as they are, all the textbooks construct a set of unique features for the Black Sea region and the Balkans as those that constitute Russia as existing international actor.

The analysis of spatial discourse shows that, the Black Sea and the Balkans played an important role in contextualization of Russia's geographical localization. Russia was constructed as an entity situated at the route of historical flows from the North to the South. Russia itself is sometimes constructed as a body in motion from the North to the South. The North was introduced as linked to the concept of something stable and sometimes civilizationally superior to Russia in material terms. In

contrast the Black Sea constitutes the part of the concept of the South which is considered a locus and the source of uncertainty for Russia. It was the source of both challenge and prospect for Russia. The representation of success followed by the failure of challenge still reinforces the image of instability.

The Black Sea and the Balkans became Russia's Gate to the World history. This is where Russia had to face the challenge of Barbarity, whether it was represented by nomads, Mongols or Turks, or had to compete with European powers. The victories of Russia followed the concept of instability and threat was reinforced through new references to new challenges. But those challenges and threats constituted the international context, in which Russia could construct itself as an international actor and could engage in interaction with other international actors.

Another important finding of the research is the fact that the texts also produce the link between political developments in the Balkans and the Black Sea region. The link is produced through the creation of causality between the certain political developments in one region and Russian gain in another region. Parallel descriptions of the Russian victories and symbol of these victories in the Balkans and in the Black Sea region constitute another mechanism of causality.

Last, but not the least, the Black Sea and the Balkans have become the arena where Russia could claim its international subjectivity. The international subjectivity of Russia (whether it is just Slavic tribes, state, power or Great Power) is defined by its ability to expand and control adjacent areas. The idea of being power was linked to the ability to obtain access to the sea – initially to the Baltic and then to the Black Sea and the Balkans. Later on, it was also related to the concept of being able to face challenges from other European powers and meet the challenge by defeating the strongest of them. In general, the concept of Greatness is linked to Russia's ability to claim its right in relations with other European powers.

Having identified the prevailing historical ideas which formed an intellectual background of the Russian society, the research will turn to the analysis of more recent textbooks and newspapers, in order to track the evolution of the discourses and those policy choices in Russian-European relations which they made thinkable and imaginable.

NOTES

- ¹ A. M. Pankratova (ed.), *Istoriya SSSR: Chast Pervaya: Uchebnik dlya 8-ogo klassa sredney shkoly*, (*History of the USSR: Part I: Textbook for the 8th grade of secondary school*), Uchpedgiz, Moscow, 1947; A. M. Pankratova (ed.) *Istoriya SSSR: Chast Vtoraya: Uchebnik dlya 9-ogo klassa sredney shkoly*, (*History of the USSR: Part II: Textbook for the 9th grade of secondary school*), Uchpedgiz, Moscow, 1958.
- ² E. M. Zhukov (ed.), *Vsemirnaya Istoriya v Desiati Tomakh*, (*World History in Ten Volumes*), Akademiya Nauk SSSR, Moscow, 1955-1965; Potemkin V. P. (ed.), *Istoriya Diplomatii* (*History of Diplomacy*), OGIZ, Moscow, 1941.
- ³ It should be also noticed that the faculties of histories were the primary faculties where the experts in the spheres of humanities were trained. There were no schools (faculties or departments) of political science, sociology or anthropology etc. Couple of area-studies and international relations institutes in the Soviet education system was mostly based in Moscow and were also dominated by this approach.
- ⁴ A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1958, p. 191.
- ⁵ S. M. Soloviev, *Istoriya Rossii s Drevneishikh Vremen: v piatnadsati knigakh* (*History of Russia since the Oldest Times: in fifteen books*), Izd-vo sotsialno-ekonomicheskoy literatury, Moscow, 1959-1965.
- ⁶ Natalya Ivanova, «A New Mosaic out of Old Fragments: Soviet History Re-Codified in Modern Russian Prose» at *Conference Papers*, Stanford University, October 1998, p. 25, available at: <http://www.stanford.edu/group/Russia20/volume/pdf/ivanova.pdf>, last accessed on 22 April 2010
- ⁷ <http://www.russika.ru/ctatjajv.asp?index=31&pr=3>.
- ⁸ V. Pikul, *Bayazet*, Moscow, 1961, online version available at: <http://lib.aldebaran.ru>, last accessed on 23 April 2010.
- ⁹ A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1947, pp. 1-4.
- ¹⁰ Although Pankratova provides detailed descriptions of the invasion of the Livonian Teutonian Orders and Swedes in the Baltic lands, the both battles of Alexander Nevsky with Teutonians and Swedes are described at one page. See A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1947, pp. 87-90.
- ¹¹ Iver Neumann, "Russia as a great power, 1815–2007", *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 11, 2008, pp. 128–151.
- ¹² A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1958, p. 22.
- ¹³ E. M. Zhukov (ed.), vol. 5, 1958, p. 14.
- ¹⁴ For long quotation of the correspondence Peter the Great received from the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople (with detailed description of European envoys bribing Sultan and Tatars to conspire against Russia) see e.g. S. M. Soloviev, book 5, 1962, pp. 525-530; see also A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1958, p. 9.

- 15 A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1947, pp. 4, 6, 7, 9-10, 12-13; E. M. Zhukov (ed.),
vol. 1, 1955, pp. 4, 26-27
- 16 V. P. Potemkin (ed.), *Istoriya Diplomatii* (History of Diplomacy), OGIZ,
Moscow, vol. 1, 1941, p. 25.
- 17 A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1947, pp. 22-27.
- 18 A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1947, pp. 23-25.
- 19 S. M. Soloviev, book 6, 1959, p. 61; see also pp. 74, 84, 90.
- 20 Albania has been a medieval Kingdom in Caucasus at the territory of modern
Azerbaijan and Iran.
- 21 A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1947, p. 15.
- 22 A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1947, p. 126.
- 23 A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1947, pp. 127-129.
- 24 E. M. Zhukov (ed.), vol. 3, 1957, p. 793.
- 25 A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1958, p. 94.
- 26 A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1954, p. 102.
- 27 A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1954, pp. 12-19, 32-33, 35, 39, 41-45, 55, 57, 62-63,
69; It is noticeable that big strikes in other provinces of Russia receive much
less attention.
- 28 A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1954, p. 72.
- 29 A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1954, pp. 195-197, 209, 211, 226-232, 260-263,
269, 361-362.
- 30 A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1947, pp. 17-21; E. M. Zhukov (ed.), vol. 2, 1956,
pp. 70-71.
- 31 A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1958, p. 240.
- 32 A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1947, p. 43. See the same script in the chapters on
the medieval diplomacy of the Russian Princes, V. P. Potemkin (ed.), 1941,
p. 120-121; Soloviev, 1959, pp. 181-185.
- 33 A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1947, pp. 131, 133-139; S. M. Soloviev, book 3,
1960, p. 391.
- 34 V. Pikul, *Bayazet*, 1961, p. 18.
- 35 A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1954, pp. 89, 92-93.
- 36 A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1954, p. 103.
- 37 E. M. Zhukov (ed.), vol. 5, 1958, pp. 225-226; S. M. Soloviev, book 8, 1962,
pp. 376-381. It is also important that Soloviev pointed to numerous calls
for help coming from these nations, see e.g. Soloviev, book 8, 1962, pp.
413-414; book 12, 1964, pp. 148-152, 215, 375-376, 488-490; book 14,
1965, pp. 304-307.
- 38 E. M. Zhukov (ed.), vol. 5, 1958, p. 652.
- 39 A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1958, p. 58. In more details the nexus is described
in E. M. Zhukov (ed.), vol. 5, 1958, p. 658 (Kagul - Larga - Ryabaya Balka
- Azov - Crimean - Chesme - Khios Island).

- 40 It is also worth mentioning that most of Russia's victories in the Black Sea were then registered in peace treaties signed in the Balkans – Belgrade Peace Treaty, Bucharest Peace Treaty, Iasi Peace Treaty, Constantinople Peace Treaty, Adrianople Peace Treaty, Kutchuk-Kainarji, Constantinople, peace, etc.
- 41 E. M. Zhukov (ed.), vol. 5, 1958, p. 654.
- 42 E. M. Zhukov (ed.), vol. 6, 1959, p. 100; Also for the description of Russian-Turkish wars of 1806-1812 see A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1958, p. 108; E. M. Zhukov, vol. 6, 1959, pp. 99-100; of Russian-Turkish war of 1828-1829 see A. M. Pankratova (ed.) 1958, p. 162.
- 43 A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1958, p. 179.
- 44 A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1954, pp. 108, 115-116.
- 45 This The first small edition of V. Pikul's, *Iz Tupika*, was published by the Saint Petersburg (Leningrad) publishing house Lenzidat in 1968. The then repeatedly republished.
- 46 V. Pikul, *Bayazet*, 1961, p. 7.
- 47 V. Pikul, *Bayazet*, 1961, pp. 49, 114, 200-201, 239.
- 48 V. Pikul, *Bayazet*, 1961, p. 13.
- 49 E. M. Zhukov (ed.), vol. 1, 1955, pp. 211-212, 215, 216, 219, 227, 258, 289, 313.
- 50 E. M. Zhukov (ed.), vol. 1, 1955, pp. 290, 316, 319-320, 324-325, 326, 331, 343, 345, 348, 353, 356, 366, 369-373, 378-383, 386, 389, 393-399, 475, 484, 493, 496-7, 502-512, 534-557, 572, 574.
- 51 E. M. Zhukov (ed.), vol. 1, 1955, p. 274; S. M. Soloviev, 1959, p. 191.
- 52 A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1947, p. 38.
- 53 Ryurikovichi are descendants of Ryurik, the first Viking warlord who came to rule to Slavic lands. V. P. Potemkin (ed.), vol. I, 1941, p. 111.
- 54 A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1947, pp. 38-42.
- 55 S. M. Soloviev, 1959, pp. 58, 130; V. P. Potemkin, 1941, p. 111.
- 56 A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1947, pp. 79-84.
- 57 S. M. Soloviev, 1959, p. 199.
- 58 Long description of decentralisation follows, see A. M. Pankratova, 1947, pp. 55-70.
- 59 Long description of unification of Russian lands constitutes one of the key themes in many volumes of Soloviev's works, see e.g. S. M. Soloviev, book 3, 1960, pp. 7-65; E. M. Zhukov (ed.), vol. 3, 1957, pp. 768-798; A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1947, pp. 106-107, 119-131.
- 60 A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1947, pp. 133-139; S. M. Soloviev, book 4, 1960, pp. 7-190.
- 61 A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1958, p. 6.
- 62 E. M. Zhukov (ed.), vol. 5, 1958, pp. 208-209, 379.
- 63 E. M. Zhukov (ed.), vol. 5, 1958, pp. 208-209, 379.

- ⁶⁴ S. M. Soloviev, book 5, 1962.
- ⁶⁵ A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1958, p. 58.
- ⁶⁶ E. M. Zhukov (ed.), vol. 5, 1958, p. 215.
- ⁶⁷ E. M. Zhukov (ed.), vol. 6, 1959, pp. 101-102.
- ⁶⁸ A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1958, p. 107.
- ⁶⁹ E. M. Zhukov (ed.), vol. 6, 1959, p. 134.
- ⁷⁰ A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1958, p. 170.
- ⁷¹ A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1958, p. 170.
- ⁷² A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1958, p. 179.
- ⁷³ Peasantry revolts in the South of Russia and Caucasus, see A. M. Pankratova (ed.), 1958, pp. 207, 228-231; E. M. Zhukov (ed.), vol. 6, 1959, pp. 476-485.

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RUSSIAN AND EUROPEAN POLICIES IN THE 'COMMON NEIGHBORHOOD': THE CASE OF MOLDOVA

Introduction

The aim of this paper is twofold. Firstly, it proposes to examine comparatively Russian and European policies in the 'common neighborhood'. Secondly, it seeks to illustrate how Russian and European policies have been manifested in Moldova. Looking to draw a holistic image, the first part will focus on objectives, tools employed and how Russian and European neighborhood policies are implemented. Geographically, the first part will deal with post-Soviet states, which form the 'land in between' where European and Russian neighborhoods overlap. To test the main findings, the second part will explore in detail Russian and European policies in Moldova along four dimensions: politics, economics, identity and security. The section dedicated to Moldova will look at developments between 2009 and 2012. The time frame covers the most politically intensive period in Moldova's post-Soviet history. First, however, an introductory question concerning the methodological angle of the research needs to be answered.

There is no single theoretical framework in the International Relations that could explain the policies of such heterogeneous actors as Russia and the EU. The debate on which analytical tools to employ to better explain actors' behavior revolves around approaches which underscore either tangible or intangible factors. Consequently, it is often assumed that Russian policy in the 'near abroad' is power-driven and pursues rough national interest, while the EU policy in the Eastern neighborhood is normatively-founded and is mainly about the diffusion of norms and ideas, and regional cooperation. Although the dichotomy between cynical realist versus benign constructivist approaches unveils some important philosophical fundamentals, neither entirely captures the factors which shape neighborhood policies. Plenty of alternative perspectives can also yield invaluable insights and help to draw a more complex picture.

Traditionally, Russian policy in the 'near abroad' is viewed through realist, neo-realist or neo-imperialist lenses,¹ while the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) is explained in terms of neo-functionalism, historical institutionalism, liberal inter-governmentalism, soft imperialism, democratic peace theory or constructivism.² In contrast, this study seeks to transcend binary approaches and advocates for 'methodological pluralism'.³ As it has been aptly underscored: "[...] Not only can different actors employ different types of behavior/action, but even a single actor can switch from one mode to another depending on the circumstances".⁴ This observation pertains to neighborhood policies which have been attuned constantly to global and regional dynamics; successive reviews of the ENP and tactical adjustments of Russian policy in the 'near abroad' stand as proof. In addition, the complexity of neighborhood policies which impact security, politics, economics, and social and environmental issues of the targeted states requires 'methodological pluralism'. Neighborhood policies are powered simultaneously by different logics. For instance, the ENP is at the nexus of the EU's foreign security development, enlargement and trade policy,⁵ each one having its own rationales. Thus, the application of various approaches correlated with the empirical data could produce a more nuanced image. If 'methodological pluralism' is only at the beginning of its career in studying the ENP,⁶ investigation of Russian neighborhood policy has so far been deprived of this eclecticism.

I. RNP and ENP compared

1.1 RNP and ENP objectives

1.1.1 RNP objectives

Russia is pursuing several interwoven and reciprocally reinforcing objectives in the 'common neighborhood'. Given their often disruptive nature in neighborhood states, "declared objectives often differ from the real ones",⁷ while hidden agendas are often implemented via covert activities. As one EU official put it, "often we do not see Russian influence in the neighborhood, but we can feel it".⁸ This should not come as a surprise as "historically, Russia displayed a profound capacity to confound and confuse partially by design and partially due to opaque political culture".⁹ Close examination of Russia's policy actions can help

to deduce what objectives the Kremlin actually follows in the 'common neighborhood'.

The first and foremost objective of the Russian Neighborhood Policy (RNP) is to build a ring of relatively weak (but not failed) states and loyal political regimes in the 'shared neighborhood'. Weak statehood serves to maintain the power asymmetry between Russia and its neighbors and facilitate Moscow's meddling in domestic affairs.¹⁰ Occasionally, its neighbors' weak statehoods are instrumentalized for Russia's domestic purposes. Presenting these neighbors as products of failed liberal projects, the Kremlin aims to boost the legitimacy of the 'vertical power' it has built at home,¹¹ thus preempting revolutionary contagion in Russia. If not always at the origins of disputes, Moscow often works to breed intra-elite conflicts, national identity splits and dysfunctional state institutions. In turn, these provide a favorable environment to set or upset the domestic or foreign policy agendas of its neighbors when needed, significantly curtailing their sovereignty. Also, weak states make it easier for Moscow to prevent what it sees as anti-Russian regimes from seizing power, or to make life unbearable for such regimes by dramatically increasing the costs of their survival. In the latter case, Moscow seeks the collapse of the regime or at least accommodation of Russian interests.

Kremlin-friendly political regimes facilitate Russian economic and military penetration.¹² At the same time, Russia's expansion in the economic and security fields provides Moscow with levers to ensure its neighbors' dependence and ultimately compliant behavior. Thus, the RNP's second objective is to establish control over strategically important sectors of the economy (mineral resources, defense, nuclear, aerospace) and vital infrastructure of the post-Soviet states.¹³ As Russian business and state interests are interlinked, economic expansion in the 'common neighborhood' is guided by mercantilist, as well as political motives, although political ones often prevail over profit-driven rationales.¹⁴ As has been aptly observed regarding the state-business nexus, "under Putin, Russian businesses have increasingly come to operate in an atmosphere that encourages close alignment with both official and the tacit goals of the state".¹⁵

The third objective of the RNP addresses macro-regional dynamics. On the one hand, Russia strives to hamper NATO and EU expansion to the 'common neighborhood'. Confirmation of this attitude comes from the highest-level in Russia; president Medvedev linked Russia's intervention in South Ossetia in 2008 with Georgia's aspirations to join NATO.¹⁶

On the other hand, Russia strives to prevent the fragmentation of what is perceived as a common economic, security and humanitarian space in the neighborhood. To this end, Russia has developed several regional integration programs to shut its neighbors off from alternative integration projects and to regulate directly or indirectly the level of engagement between post-Soviet states and the EU and NATO. Humanitarian space preservation is supported through various soft power instruments aimed to augment Russian cultural influence and spread Russia-centric perceptions among people and elites in the post-Soviet region.

Simultaneously, this should have helped Russia to advance another regional objective, namely the recognition of its sphere of 'privileged interests' in the 'near abroad'. From a normative point of view, such recognition is essential for Russia's self-perception as a great power.¹⁷ During recent years, Russia intensively sought to extract the legal and practical recognition of a 'privileged interests' zone from Western powers. In 2009 the Kremlin floated the European Security Treaty draft, which if concluded would implicitly seal the status quo, legitimize Russian-sponsored initiatives in the post-Soviet region and halt any future NATO or EU enlargement, as it might be regarded by signatory states as diminishing their national security.¹⁸ In another attempt in 2010, Moscow proposed a sector-based Russian-NATO missile defense system to overcome the stalemate on the US missile shield.

Ultimately, by securing the above-mentioned objectives, Russia would earn the ability to assert its great power status on global scale.¹⁹ Seen from Moscow, one of defining features of contemporary international relations is regionalization. Regions are organized politically and economically around powerful poles, which form pillars of an international system. Russian-driven integration in the post-Soviet region aspires to project Russia as one such regional pole with global clout. As one Russian observer underscored: "[...] integration in the post-Soviet region is an opportunity to strengthen our negotiating position in dialogue with competitors for leadership".²⁰ Thus, Russia's primacy in the 'near abroad' is regarded as a prerequisite for its effective participation in a multilateral arrangement of great powers. This belief explains why the post-Soviet region is presented in state documents as Russia's main foreign policy priority.

1.1.2 ENP objectives

The EU engages its neighbors actively in order to advance several interlinked objectives. Analysis of official documents and actions unveils an ENP which is powered by a combination of normative/duty-narratives and threat/risk security narratives.²¹ In one of the first conceptual attempts to define the ENP, the EU argued that it “has a duty, not only towards its citizens and those of the new member states, but also towards its present and future neighbors to ensure continuing social cohesion and economic dynamism”.²² However, the duty narrative is balanced by a risk security narrative. The EU’s Security Strategy dedicates a large amount of space to security threats in the neighborhood and how to address them.²³ Although duty-based and security-based objectives often generate tensions, they are mutually reinforcing and cannot be separated.

As the EU faces weak states on its periphery, one of its objectives is to support state-building or state-consolidation.²⁴ Due to increasing interdependence, weak states with dysfunctional state apparatuses pose multiple soft security threats for the EU, as they are often engaged in conflicts, the export of organized crime and illegal immigration.²⁵ State-building efforts are particularly relevant in the Eastern neighborhood, where the ex-Soviet republics regained independence after the collapse of Soviet Union and embarked on nation and state-building processes. The EU’s support for building functional state institutions and improving the quality of governance aims to strengthen its neighbors’ statehood. One way to make state-building results durable is democracy. Thus, democratization is another task the ENP pursues. The EU does not impose democracy on others. However, the amount of assistance provided towards state building depends not on political regime loyalty, but on the partner state’s commitment to the principles and values of democracy. In this regard the EU’s High Representative for the CFSP remarked: “we do system change, not a regime change”.²⁶ This underlines the linkage between democratic state building and the long-term stability the EU is looking for in the neighborhood.

Political liberalization and institutions alone cannot guarantee stability in the neighborhood. Therefore, the EU’s second objective is to bring prosperity through “inclusive economic development – so that EU neighbors can trade, invest and grow in a sustainable way, reducing social and regional inequalities, creating jobs for their workers and higher standards of living for their people”.²⁷ Toward this aim, the EU facilitates

the gradual convergence and sectoral integration of its partners into its common market. The drive toward integration is guided by a formula of “sharing everything but institutions”.²⁸

But integration is not only about helping neighbors. It also involves a mercantile agenda of gaining access to the new markets. While some neighbors’ domestic markets are negligible because of their size, others represent a big piece of the pie for European businesses (e.g., Ukraine with population almost 46 million). Moreover, several neighbors provide transit or supply the EU with oil and gas. Thus, besides improving energy efficiency, rehabilitating partner states’ energy-related infrastructure and connecting it to the European market, integration aims to enhance the EU’s energy security as well. Often interests in the energy field create tension with the EU’s democratization objectives. Finally, integration means building links between the EU’s and the partner states’ specialized institutions to tackle soft security threats, such as illegal immigration, drugs and human trafficking, and cyber crimes. As one EU diplomat framed it: “We do not want a neighborhood which puts security pressure on us.”²⁹ In this field as well, the EU’s security interests often clash with its democratization agenda.

These very tangible ENP goals are congruent with the EU’s aspirations to reaffirm the viability of its model in its immediate periphery and assert itself into foreign politics under a ‘modest force for good’ banner.³⁰ Thus, for the EU, the neighborhood is “the principal testing ground for the European Union’s claim to have developed a unique capacity to promote internal transformations of states, which is driven less by a realist calculus of military power than by the civilian tools of economic integration and moral persuasion”.³¹ Its self-reproduction in the neighborhood has foreign policy implications for the EU and its international standing. Effectively employing ‘transformative power’ in the neighborhood should support the EU’s ‘strategic ambitions to be taken seriously as an autonomous and powerful actor in international politics’.³²

1.2 RNP and ENP tools/implementation

1.2.1 RNP tools/implementation

In the political realm, Russia often plays the role of electoral or post-electoral entrepreneur. Russia provides photo opportunities at the Kremlin for incumbent loyal leaders to boost their chances of being

re-elected and dispatches high-ranking officials throughout the region in the run-up to elections for the same purpose. Russia also orchestrates TV campaigns against leaders who tend in the Kremlin's view to disregard Russian interests in the region. Russian TV channels air documentaries exposing massive corruption in high echelons of power or reports on local officials' failure to deliver on previous electoral promises. Russia also often relies on CIS election monitors to validate rigged elections, covering up human rights abuses during the vote. When a Russian-friendly candidate is elected, a positive assessment from the monitors is usually followed by swift congratulations from the Kremlin. Alternatively, CIS monitors can play democratic games as well, harassing disloyal regimes with tough oversight of pre-electoral campaigns. In the case of an unsatisfactory outcome for the Kremlin, Russian TV channels are quick to point out that the dubious quality of the vote has led to local protest movements, if such events flare up after elections. However, if the post-electoral protest is aimed against a Russian-friendly candidate, the Kremlin is ready to provide authoritarian diplomatic protection against international monitors' criticism, blaming external forces for attempts to destabilize the country. Consequently Russia often uses such windows of opportunity, when leaders are under attack at home and/or heavily criticized by international organizations, to deepen states' economic and security dependence on Russia. The Kremlin is very efficient in extracting economic and political concessions in pre-electoral or bumpy post-electoral phases, which would be difficult to obtain otherwise. If elections are inconclusive, Moscow might send a high-ranking official to forge a Russian-friendly coalition in exchange for economic benefits. To solidify Russian influence, parties are also giving the opportunity to sign cooperation protocols with the powerful Russian party "United Russia". In case of un-friendly regimes, Russia works to isolate them internationally and/or to undermine from inside by inciting Russian-speaking minorities. NGO's are also often instrumentalized to promote Moscow's message that the wrong political orientation will have negative economic consequences and to outline the advantages of cooperating with Russia and joining its regional integration projects. Seeking to strengthen its political influence, the Kremlin provides financial and logistical support to political movements or parties with a pro-Russian message.

Russia is the biggest economy by share size in the post-Soviet region. It attracts millions of guest workers (legal and illegal) from the region, who by sending home several billion dollars annually fuel economic growth

in their countries of origin. Russia remains a significant trade partner for many states in the neighborhood and the ultimate source of cash, free of democratic strings, in times of crisis. Given these factors, over the last decade Russia has extensively applied economic levers to accomplish its objectives. The global economic crisis strengthened rather than diminished Russia's propensity to use economic tools in the post-Soviet region. Therefore, Russia (on a bilateral basis or via EurAsEc) has promised or offered loans and credits (to governments or local banks), gas at a discounted price and certain amounts of oil free of duty tax to obtain the right to participate in the privatization of strategic assets, to prolong its military presence and to bring neighbors inside Russian-sponsored regional economic projects, such as the CU or the CIS Free Trade Area. Russia recently provided diplomatic support against economic sanctions the EU imposed on Belarus, a CU member.³³ Russian experts observe that this kind of solidarity is a long-term trend which will become stronger with deeper economic integration among core groups of states in the post-Soviet region.³⁴ Besides carrots, Russia often uses economic sticks: limitation of access to its market, expulsion of immigrants, suspension of oil or gas deliveries, sudden hikes in gas prices, and communication blockades. Moscow uses or threatens to use these sticks to get involved in the privatization of attractive economic assets, to discourage neighbors' economic association with the EU and to coerce them to join Russian regional projects. The Russian side argues that by joining the Eurasian Union, states will boost their collective bargaining power and will get better terms of economic cooperation with the EU.³⁵

Despite the fact that Russia's cultural clout in the "common neighborhood" is declining, the Kremlin still holds several strong cards and lately invested substantial resources to boost its soft power. In EaP states Russia and its politicians (Putin and Medvedev) stand high in opinion polls. Important segments of society (between 40% and 80%) see Russia as an ally, strategic partner or attractive economic integrator (through the CU or the Eurasian Union). Even in Georgia after the 2008 war, the overwhelming majority of citizens who regard Russia as a threat to national security support dialogue with Russia and normalization of relations.³⁶ Russia's high scores in the neighborhood rest on Russian language and pop culture, religion, mass media, Russian-speaking population, scholarships for students, nostalgia for Soviet times' social welfare among the older population, immigrants who work in Russia, and socialization using Russian social networks. To amplify these advantages and convert cultural

potential in the neighborhood into political or economic dividends, the Kremlin has relied on partnerships with old institutions (the Russian Church), developed new institutions (e.g., Rossotrudnichestvo; Department of Socio-Economic Cooperation with CIS Countries, Abkhazia and South Ossetia within presidential administration, Russia's President Special Representative for Cooperation with Compatriots Organizations Abroad) as well as state sponsored NGOs and movements (Russkiy Mir; Gorchakov's Public Diplomacy Support Fund; "Fatherland-Eurasian Union"), and is planning to create a new one (Russian Aid).

Besides organizing work with compatriots, this institutional infrastructure has been put into use to promote Russian-friendly historical narratives, diminish social support for the EU, propagate the idea of a Eurasian Union and forestall some reforms by invoking incompatibility with religious and moral values. Russia's soft power seduces not only the general public, but inspires elites as well. Russia provides a model of "authoritarian capacity building",³⁷ which ensures political regime resilience against bottom up democratization efforts.³⁸ In some cases, it also offers examples of foreign policy behavior. Therefore, the pronounced authoritarian trends in Ukraine after the presidential elections in 2010 were described as a "putinization" of the political system.

Russia remains the most powerful military actor in the neighborhood and often employs security levers to complement political and economic ones, or uses them as a last resort when political and economic coercion has not paid off. In addition to the full scale or limited use of military force against its neighbors, Russia redraws borders, fuels separatist sentiments, orchestrate cyber-attacks, extends its military presence or opens new bases, sells arms to conflict sides or acts to restrict arms transfers to states perceived as foes, participates in negotiation formats on protracted conflicts, strengthens *de facto* states, develops regional security forums and alliances, questions on the diplomatic level the integrity or viability of neighbors' state projects, provides security guarantees in the case of military conflict, and conducts "peace-keeping" missions. The Kremlin instrumentalizes security levers to keep or deepen states' fragility and dependence on Russia's security guarantees, to shut out other military alliances from expanding into the region, to maintain the status quo when favorable to Russia in conflict regions having enough resources to ignite tensions when deemed necessary, and to influence the foreign policy orientation of its neighbors.

1.2.2 ENP tools/implementation

In the political playing field, the EU also often behaves as an electoral entrepreneur, but the influence it exerts is of a different kind. The EU is more preoccupied with the quality of the process, rather than with who prevails in the competition. Obviously, EU member states have political preferences. But the EU tries hard to stay neutral in the run up to elections. Therefore, the EU is reluctant to provide photo opportunities to leaders before elections. Instead it encourages further interaction with the authorities on fair and free elections. Even if the European Council gives the mandate, the EU waits for the elections test before starting talks on Association Agreements or releasing macro-financial assistance. Similarly, if both sides have finalized negotiations, the EU could delay signing Association Agreements (AA) and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTA) pending the conduct of fair and free elections in the partner state. To monitor the electoral process, the EU contributes to OSCE/ODIHR election observation missions dispatching members of the European Parliament. In case of a post-electoral crisis, the EU, if invited, mediates between those in power and the opposition. Elections conducted with gross violations of human rights followed by violence and persecution of political opponents usually trigger critical resolutions of the European Parliament, sanctions, increased support for civil society and the scaling back of financial assistance to the government. In such cases, the EU insists on impartial investigation and the release of political detainees. When the EU's economic interests are at stake as well, EU institutions tend to use a "division of labor". For instances, the EU Commission promotes its interests by striking deals, while the European Parliament advance its values by securing the release of opposition figures.³⁹ The EU employs a variety of political tools to solidify neighbors' statehood and to support democratization after elections: Association Agreements, high level visits, human rights dialogues, the European Instrument for Human Rights and Democracy and Civil Society Facility funding (and in perspective the European Endowment for Democracy), diplomatic backing, funding for the development of institutions which guarantee the rule of law, high advisory missions, action plans or individual road maps to guide reforms, and increased funding for the best performers of reform in the neighborhood (Governance Facility).

The EU's economic presence in the neighborhood rapidly expanded in the 2000s. Economic interconnection between the EU and its eastern

neighbors has deepened due to EU member states' investments and the EU's unilateral and asymmetric preferences (Generalized System of Preferences - GSP or GSP+; Autonomous Trade Preferences - ATPs), which extended duty-free treatment to certain products, thus opening the European market for its neighbors. The EU launched negotiations on DCFTA with four out of six states in the Eastern Partnership (Belarus and Azerbaijan are not members of WTO), which aim to eliminate mutual non-tariff trade barriers. The EU uses DCFTA talks and necessary reforms to implement agreements to build institutions, improve investment climates and institute the rule of law. To this end, the EU has pushed its neighbors to carry out reforms as a precondition to start DCFTA talks, and later unveiled financial packages for sectoral reforms and the Comprehensive Institutional Building program (CIB) to support reforms. To improve governance and public administration, the EU in partnership with OECD extended in 2008 the multidimensional assistance provided within the Support for Improvement of Governance and Management Program (SIGMA) to its neighbors. To bolster the development of social and economic infrastructure, the European Investment Bank (EIB) launched in 2010 the Eastern Partnership Technical Assistance Trust Fund. In parallel with ongoing DCFTA talks with its eastern neighbors, the EU actively pursues sectoral integration. During the global economic turmoil in 2008-2009, the EU assumed the new role of expanding economic instruments previously employed only occasionally. It provided macro-financial assistance and facilitated the release of IMF loans to stabilize the macro-economic situation in the eastern neighborhood, ultimately helping its partners to weather the crisis.

The deployment of political and economic tools in the eastern neighborhood fuels profound societal transformations which reshape national identities. Reforms encouraged by the EU help to overcome civic apathy and intolerance. For instance the EU's focus on the protection of consumer rights nurtures the logic of the "consumer-based market" in opposition to the prevailing model in the region, that of the "seller-based market", a leftover from the Soviet epoch. The EU empowers citizens to demand respect not only of political rights, but also of economic and social ones, thus impacting various sectors of society and the state. The EU foments debates on tolerance and non-discrimination, norms enshrined in constitutions to which governments often pay lip service. Substantial soft power, still used across the neighborhood despite the economic crisis in the Euro zone,⁴⁰ allows the EU to generate transformative effects. Citizens in Eastern Partnership states have a preponderantly positive image about

the EU, support accession to EU to various degrees, would like to study or work in the EU, and are learning European languages in increasing numbers, challenging Russia's status as the lingua franca in the "shared neighborhood". Over the last decade, the EU developed instruments to boost its cultural influence: operationalization of EU Information Centers, visa facilitation or visa-free dialogues, mobility partnerships, students exchange programs (Tempus and Erasmus Mundus), research and innovation (participation in FP7), Civil Society Facility and cultural events and celebrations.

Often criticized for being a one-dimensional power which is not able to speak with one voice and lacks military capabilities,⁴¹ the EU has become increasingly involved in hard and soft security issues in the "common neighborhood". In some cases the EU has been forced by the crisis in its neighborhood to react, but there are examples of deliberate and pro-active involvement in tackling security issues. The EU has developed several instruments to promote a multidimensional vision of security. In addition to safeguarding macro-economic and social stability as well as improving energy security in the eastern neighborhood, the EU has mediated cease-fire agreements, extended the institute of Special Representatives (EUSR) and deployed CSDP missions to the region, gotten involved in post-conflict negotiations and applied sanctions against those who were blocking the peace-talks, sponsored infrastructure projects and confidence-building measure between sides, provided technical assistance for the demarcation of borders, offered equipment and funds to improve border controls and combat trans-border crimes, contributed to the modernization of law enforcement institutions, encouraged border cooperation between states in the region, concluded readmission agreements, started to institutionalize the link between law enforcement agencies and Europol and Frontex, and organized cooperation in the prevention of and response to natural and man-made disasters. To draw neighbors more closely into the realm of the EU's foreign and security policy (CFSP), states are regularly invited to adhere to the EU's CFSP positions. Responding to the aspiration of its neighbors, the EU launched bilateral consultation on CSDP, which could lead to bilateral agreements that would allow EaP states to participate in CSDP missions.

II. RNP and ENP in Moldova

2.1 RNP in Moldova

2.1.1 Politics

In the run-up to the 2009 parliamentary elections, Russia acted to boost the Moldovan Communist Party's chances to stay in power. Despite bumpy relations between the Communist government and the Kremlin after the failure of the Kozak memorandum, Russia decided to support what has been seen in the Moldovan political field as the lesser evil. Moscow dispatched in March 2009 the foreign minister to Chisinau, his first visit to Moldova since 2001. Later that month, outgoing president Vladimir Voronin was offered a photo opportunity at the Kremlin. Unlike in 2005, when Moldovan authorities stopped CIS election observers at the Moldovan-Ukrainian border, in 2009 the Communist government welcomed monitors from the CIS. In the aftermath of the April 2009 elections, the CIS election-monitoring arm qualified the vote as "free and transparent",⁴² while Russia officials swiftly recognized the outcome of the elections in which the Communist Party prevailed. The Kremlin promptly reacted to post-electoral violence by providing diplomatic back up for the Communist government and by praising the Moldovan authorities for economic stability and multi-vector foreign policy, and at the same time blaming external forces for trying to undo these accomplishments.⁴³

After the Communists failed to recruit the one vote in the parliament needed to elect a head of state, the Kremlin again threw its weight behind the Communist Party in early elections. Vladimir Voronin was offered more photo opportunities with the Russian leadership in Moscow and was promised a \$500 million loan.⁴⁴ After the elections, the Kremlin sent the head of presidential administration, Sergey Naryshkin, to convince Democratic Party headed by Marian Lupu to join the Communists in a central-left ruling coalition. When this attempt failed and the Alliance for European Integration (AEI) was formed instead, Russia scaled back its \$500 million promise and invested resources to strengthen its ties with the Democratic Party, a member of the new ruling coalition in Moldova. With the Communists in opposition, Moscow was looking to have a strong voice inside the AEI by supporting Lupu's candidacy for president and institutionalizing a partnership between "United Russia", the party in power in Russia, and Moldova's Democratic Party. However, as the political crisis in Moldova dragged on, Russia switched tactics. It shifted

into first gear, speculating on new opportunities offered by the early elections in 2010. In December 2010 the head of the Russian presidential administration again visited Moldova to foster the development of a center-left coalition, apparently tempting the Communist and Democratic Parties with discount gas prices, non-restricted access to the Russian market and economic integration projects developed by Russia. But his mission proved again unsuccessful.

In 2011 Russia continued its electoral entrepreneurship in Moldova. It supported the Communist Party in local elections and engineered the removal of Transnistrian leader Igor Smirnov, who despite the Kremlin's advice refused to step down. Russian TV channels aired critical reports about Chisinau's mayor Dorin Chirtoaca and documentaries about the separatist leader's shadow deals. To put pressure on the AEL and Smirnov, Russia raised doubts regarding the correctness of the electoral process in Moldova, particularly in the capital city of Chisinau,⁴⁵ launched a criminal investigation against Igor Smirnov's younger son and suspended financial aid to Transnistria. As the Communist Party kept losing important members, who ventured into the re-making of political parties, Russia decided to support such initiatives. The Party of Socialists from Moldova, headed by Igor Dodon, is a case in point. Despite the successful election of a head of the state in 2012, which prevented more early elections in Moldova, Russia still portrays the ruling coalition in Chisinau as incapable of defining and promoting a set of clear objectives.⁴⁶

2.1.2 Economics

Although Moldova's trade has diversified, Russia remains an important market for Moldovan goods (26% of exports in 2010),⁴⁷ a vital source of natural resources (natural gas) and an attractive destination for migrant workers (estimations vary between 100.000 and 400.000). Given the European orientation of the ruling coalition in Chisinau, the Kremlin did not hesitate to use economic levers to underscore Moldova's structural dependencies on Russia, to convey a strong signal to respect Russian economic and political interests, and to hamper reforms that endanger Russia's position in Moldova. Between 2009 and 2012 Russia several times selectively restricted access to its market for Moldovan goods claiming poor quality and a failure to comply with Russian standards. Usually temporary restrictions were followed by a period of negotiations, inspections and ultimately a re-opening of the Russian market. Instead of

permanently shutting down access to its market, Russia preferred to play the game of “half-closed, half-open door” in order to mount domestic pressure on the government and to induce a more cooperative stance towards Russian economic initiatives. In particular Russia eyed Moldova’s participation in the CIS Free Trade Area. It seems that Russia would like to see Moldova in the CU as well after bringing in Ukraine.⁴⁸ In spite of Moldova’s proposals in 2010 to relax the travel and registration regime, Moscow has dragged its feet in negotiations. In May 2012 both sides announced the conclusion of talks on a labor force migration agreement. However, it was not clear whether after signing the agreement Moscow would ease registration rules for Moldovans, who often come to Russia as seasonal workers for 2-3 months. Fully aware of the importance of remittances for Moldova (around \$1 billion came from Russia in 2011, oscillating between 20-30% of GDP⁴⁹), Russia will play the migration/registration card as long as it can, linking the issue to membership in the CU. The Russian ambassador to Chisinau insinuated that Moldovan migrant workers would benefit from better conditions once Moldova joins CU.⁵⁰

The energy sector in Moldova draws much Russian attention. While the 2007-2011 gas supply and transit contract with Gazprom envisioned a gradual price increase up to the level paid by European customers, Russia hinted in 2011 that Moldova might get a discount if it is ready for a Harkiv-type deal; in other words an extended Russian military presence in exchange for cheap gas. Later Russia implied that by joining the CU Moldova could get up to a 30% discount for oil and gas, as export duties are not applied to Russian energy resources exported within the CU.⁵¹ These trade-off proposals were followed in parallel by the instrumentalization of sticks. In 2010 Moldova acceded to the Energy Community, assuming obligations to align its legislation and practices with European ones by 2015. The provision that raised eyebrows in Moscow was the separation of production from the transport and distribution of gas (unbundling) when the same company controls both. This is the case of Moldovagaz in which the majority stakeholder is the Russian state monopoly Gazprom. Anticipating the upcoming unbundling, the Kremlin delayed negotiations on a new long-term gas supply contract with Moldova, pressured the government to give up on unbundling and raised the issue of the payment of the gas debt (around \$100 million), including Transnistrian’s debt (which nears \$3 billion).⁵²

2.1.3 Identity

In Moldova, the soft power developed by Russia has impacted elites as well as the general public. The outgoing leader Vladimir Voronin tried to reproduce an authoritarian scheme of power (non-) transfer. By moving into the position of speaker of the parliament and naming the successor in the presidential seat, Voronin tried to imitate a Putin-style power transition. Thus, he aimed to respect constitutional provisions formally in order to stay and consolidate his position in the power pyramid. As this soft authoritarianism scenario failed and Moldova formed a European-oriented coalition government instead, Russia actively employed soft power instruments to shape the information space and public opinion. In the aftermath of post-election violence, Russia revived Romania's threat to Moldovan statehood rhetoric. Later the Russian foundation "Recognition" organized a series of public debates questioning the feasibility of Moldova's European choice, criticizing the deployment of US missile shield elements in Romania and attacking those who tried to falsify history.

Russian officials selectively adopted a soft power discourse towards Moldova. For instance, former representative of Russia in the bilateral inter-governmental economic commission Andrei Fursenko declared that "Russia never regarded Moldova as a wine republic only. You had in the past a strong school of physicians and mathematicians".⁵³ To provide a new impetus for cooperation in the humanitarian sphere, he promised to increase the number of scholarships for Moldovan students in Russian universities to 500. In 2009 Russia opened the Center of Science and Culture in Chisinau, while "Russian World" launched its regional center in Transnistria. In just 3 years the Russian Cultural Center substantially increased its visibility not only in Chisinau, but across the country.

Russia's soft power was put to work in Moldova to blur national identity formation, change foreign policy priorities and hinder European integration. Russian sponsored NGOs, even if unable to organize mass public events, are usually very vocal in the public space. They protest against pro-unionist manifestations, support Russian military actions in Georgia, demand renaming of streets, distribute Russian symbols during holidays and organize celebrations of Russian national holidays. The launch of the Eurasian Union initiative in Moscow had immediate spill over effects in Moldova. The Russian Center of Science and Culture in Chisinau organized a debate on the benefits Moldova could obtain by joining the CU. Russia supported the creation of the Eurasia-Inform

Center, which aims to provide information about Moldova's integration into the Eurasian Union. The Center organized with the support of Rossotrudnichestvo and the Center of Social-Conservative Politics affiliated with the "United Russia" Party a conference on Moldova's perspectives in the Eurasian Union. To provide further support to the Eurasian Union theme, the Eurasia News Agency started to operate in Moldova in July 2012. At the same time, under the banner "Fatherland-Eurasian Union" Russian MPs from the "United Russia" Party launched an initiative to unite all pro-Russian organizations in Moldova and streamline their activities, a process not confined to Moldova.⁵⁴ Last but not least, besides being involved in electoral entrepreneurship in Moldova, the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) has been instrumentalized to obstruct Moldova's European integration. In a move without precedent, the ROC publicly opposed the drafting of an equal opportunity law and later condemned its adoption, denouncing its "sexual orientation" formulation.⁵⁵ As the law was part of the road map towards a visa-free regime with the European Union, the ROC, closely interacting with the Kremlin, hindered Moldova's European agenda by publicly supporting constituencies that were effectively militating against the law.

2.1.4 Security

Russia is an indispensable actor in the resolution of the protracted conflict in Transnistria. Although Russia's position in Transnistria is not as strong as before, the Kremlin possesses a variety of instruments to shape politics and economics in the separatist region. For instance, the Russian-sponsored candidate advanced to the second round of the presidential elections in 2011, but ultimately was defeated by the independent Evghenii Shevchyuk. However, in the aftermath of elections Russia flexed its muscles in Transnistria by temporarily suspending financial aid. In terms of Russian foreign policy, the conflict in Transnistria has implications for EU-Russia relations, overall policy in the "common neighborhood" and Moldo-Russian relations. The EU and Russia discuss the Transnistrian conflict in the context of potential cooperation in the realm of foreign and security policy. Russia's policy actions in Transnistria often send signals to the EU as well as to immediate neighbors. After the war in the South Caucasus, Russia's discourse on Transnistria sought to convince the EU and post-Soviet states that recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia is an exception, and that Moscow is ready to engage

constructively to settle protracted conflicts in the Black Sea region. Last but not least, the Transnistrian conflict is instrumentalized to project and strengthen Russia's influence over the present and future of Moldova.

Firstly, the Russian side linked settlement of the conflict to Moldova's permanent neutrality status. Although Moldova's neutrality is enshrined in its Constitution, Russia suspects that it could be amended once Moldova is reintegrated. Russia therefore seeks additional guarantees that a reunified Moldova will not join NATO. Practically, Russia refuses Moldova the freedom to choose its military alliances. Secondly, Russia tries to hinder or misuse the "5+2" format to prevent any progress in negotiations. In 2006 Russia encouraged Transnistria to withdraw from "5+2" talks when Ukraine agreed to enforce a customs regime on the border with Transnistria and the EU deployed a border assistance mission to facilitate the implementation of the agreement. In the period 2009-2011 when the international community mounted pressure to restart "5+2" talks, the Russian side tried to stonewall the process by invoking domestic instability in Moldova and the lack of a credible partner in Chisinau.⁵⁶ After talks resumed, Russia showed little flexibility behind closed doors during successive rounds in Dublin and Vienna.⁵⁷ Thirdly, Russia seeks in the medium and long term a formula for reunification that would allow it to influence Moldova's domestic and foreign politics decisively via a Transnistrian elite integrated into Moldova's political power structure.⁵⁸

Recently Russia acted to solidify its clout in the region by reiterating its military presence in Transnistria until a political solution to the conflict is found. Russian universities concluded cooperation agreements with Tiraspol State University. Russia strengthened Transnistria's currency reserves in 2012 and planned further financial assistance to the separatist entity. There are signs that Russia is considering taking over Transnistria's gas network in exchange for forgiving its debts, and re-launching the process of passportization. To boost its political oversight of the region and deepen Russia's multilevel relations with Transnistria, the Kremlin appointed Dmitry Rogozin, the deputy-prime minister of the Russian government responsible for the defense industry, as the president's special representative to Transnistria.

2.2 ENP in Moldova

2.2.1 Politics

The elections in 2009 overlapped with preliminary talks between Moldova and the EU to start negotiations on the AA. The EU conditioned the launch of AA talks on free and fair elections in April. Although with some delays, the EU reacted to post-electoral violence by dispatching the EUSR, the prime minister of the EU's rotating presidency and High Representative for the CFSP to Chisinau. The EU aimed to stop human rights abuses and find a political solution to the crisis by trying to mediate between power and opposition. The EU Parliament adopted a resolution on Moldova condemning violence against protesters and demanding a peaceful and consensual way out of the crisis.⁵⁹ As the talks produced no results and Moldova headed to early elections, the EU focused again on fairness and correctness of the vote. The EU saluted the improved electoral process and the formation of a ruling coalition after the elections. Once the government was installed, the EU worked to stabilize the situation by nudging power and opposition to find a compromise on the election of the head of state. When the AEI was contemplating solutions that excluded the Communist Party, the EU pressured authorities in Chisinau to keep decisions within the framework provided by the Constitution and to take account of the Venice Commission recommendations.⁶⁰ The EU was crucial in negotiating the new agreement between AEI members after new early elections in 2010.⁶¹ The EU was also instrumental in reaching a consensus inside the alliance to engage with three MP's who broke with the Communist Party in order to overcome the political stalemate. As a result the Moldovan parliament elected a president in 2012.

Soon after its formation the AEI worked to improve relations with EU member states, in particular with Romania, and to foster a more pluralist environment. These moves triggered measures taken by the EU to deepen relations with Moldova and support the reformist drive of the new government. The EU launched AA talks, opened a human rights dialogue and sent a High Level Advisory Mission. The EU has shown political and symbolic support for Moldova's European future. The group European Friends of Moldova, initiated by Romania and France in 2010, has rapidly expanded. An unprecedented number of visits by high ranking EU officials to Moldova and vice versa took place since 2010. These have been complemented by an intense interaction between mid-ranking officials from Moldovan ministries and EU Commission Directorates.

The EU Delegation in Moldova increased its profile and visibility in the public space. In 2011, the EU Parliament adopted a positive resolution on Moldova calling for the application of a “more for more” approach.⁶² To reward Moldova for progress on reforms the EU provided funds from the Governance Facility and increased the ENPI bilateral allocation from €209.7 million between 2007 and 2010 to €273.1 million between 2011 and 2013.⁶³ The EU did not hesitate to use conditionality to speed up reforms (e.g. adoption of a justice sector reform strategy).⁶⁴ As Moldova passed the test of the 2011 local elections and overcame the political deadlock regarding the election of the president, in early 2012 the EU multiplied its signals to channel all efforts into domestic reforms and to pay peculiar attention to fighting corruption.⁶⁵

2.2.2 Economics

As the new government in Chisinau had to face repercussions of the global economic crisis, the EU stepped in and boosted macro-financial assistance to Moldova. It allocated €90 million in 2010 to stabilize the macro-economic situation.⁶⁶ The EU decided to prolong the ATP's validity for Moldova until 2015 and extend import quotas for wine, wheat, barley and maize. Despite some downturn in bilateral trade, it rebounded in 2011, with the EU remaining Moldova's main trade partner (50%) and a major destination of Transnistrian exports (45.5% in January-November 2010). However, the EU channeled its major efforts towards sectoral integration, which would challenge the monopolized economy, increase transparency, bind Moldova to the European market, attract the FDI and instigate economic development. The EU opened negotiations on DCFTA in 2012 as Moldova fulfilled a set of preconditions and the EU Fact Finding mission submitted a positive evaluation on work done by Chisinau. The EU signed with Moldova a Common Aviation Area deal and welcomed it to the Energy Community after several normative acts in the energy sector (laws on natural gas and electric energy) were passed by the national parliament. To help Moldova in fulfilling its obligations taken under the AA, the DCFTA, the Common Aviation Area and the Energy Community, the EU earmarked €41.6 million for CIB in Moldova, allocating the first tranche of €14 million in 2012. This program in particular will support the creation of agencies responsible for the enforcement of sanitary and phytosanitary norms. Modernization of legislation will have no effect without an independent, functional judiciary. Thus, the EU allocated

€62 million in technical and budget support to Moldova to implement justice sector reform.

The EU approved also Moldova's participation in European Community programs and agencies opened for candidate countries (e.g. in the fields of transpiration, food safety, customs and aviation security). The EU has worked to improve Moldova's energy security and infrastructure and to increase the competitiveness of local industries. Between 2010 and 2012 the EIB approved loans to support the modernization of roads (€75 million), the wine industry (€75 million) and electricity transmission systems (€17 million).⁶⁷ The EU Commission decided to finance a feasibility study on the interconnection of electric networks between Ukraine and Moldova and European. To alleviate pressure exercised by Russia, the EU co-financed a project for the connection of a gas pipe between Moldova and Romania. If successfully carried out, the project will provide Moldova with an alternative source of gas in case of shortages, accidents or disputes between third parties which disrupt deliveries to Moldova. According to Moldovan diplomats, the EU is closely following ongoing negotiations between Moldova and Russia over a new gas delivery contract; the Moldovan side informs and consults with the EU on this matter.⁶⁸ By the end of 2014 Moldova should "unbundle" its gas transportation and distribution network. In this regard, one EU official explains, "in 2015 we will be directly involved in gas delivery contract negotiations as the EU will have to evaluate it for confirmation with the *acquis communautaire*."⁶⁹

2.2.3 Identity

While pushing for political and economic reforms the EU has directly or indirectly influenced the content of social debates and the identity formation process in Moldova. Rapid rapprochement between EU and Moldova in 2009 has generated much more interest in the mass media and society about European integration. The possibility of visa-free travel to Europe is on the top of Moldovan citizens' European agenda. As the opposition picked a target, namely an anti-discrimination law which is part of the visa-free road map with EU, Moldovan society was challenged to debate attitudes towards sexual and religious minorities. Another law linked to the DCFTA also has the potential to impact society. The consumer protection act adopted in 2012 goes against a deeply engrained logic that the seller is the master of the market, while the consumer is a powerless agent. Implementation of this law has the potential not only to increase

the quality of products and services provided, but also gradually to change attitudes towards customers. In general, the process of Europeanization in Moldova has contributed to civic participation and strengthened the basis for a rule-based society.

To multiply and convert the increasing interest in European integration, the EU expanded its network of EU Information Centers across the country and is planning to open one in Tiraspol as well. In addition to education opportunities in Europe for young people provided by the Erasmus Mundus and Tempus programs, the EU opened its research and innovation program FP7 to Moldova in 2012. In 2012 the EU Delegation, instead of celebrating "Europe's Day" on the 9th of May, organized together with EU member states a diplomatic mission called "Europe's Week" with sports, cultural and artistic events, debates and public presentations across the country, especially in euro skeptic regions of Moldova (e.g. Gagauzia). Thus, the EU aimed to underline its common European heritage and unite Moldovans around a theme which could transcend bitter divisions over the interpretation of history.

2.2.4 Security

In terms of security, the EU sought to combat soft security threats in Moldova and to make headway on the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict. The EU also played a crucial role in addressing issues which had poisoned relations between Moldova and its neighbors, Romania and Ukraine. To address a variety of security issues the EU extensively employed a visa-free dialogue, Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements, a Mobility Partnership signed in 2008, the EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM), Europol, Frontex, mediation activities and financial incentives.

The Moldovan government adopted a pro-active stance on visa-liberalization, setting it as a major objective. The EU reciprocated by financially supporting the transition from regular to biometric passports. The EU also played a role in equipping and connecting 40 of Moldova's border check points in order to improve information flow and exchange as well the monitoring of the border. Besides technical assistance the EU via EUBAM has been involved in training and instructing Moldovan border guards. After several successive EU assessment missions to Moldova, the EU decided to offer in 2011 a two-phase visa-free road map. The process required the reform of the Border Guard Service and the Center

for Combating Economic Crimes and Corruption. Both institutions will undergo radical transformation, which will lead to the formation of the Border Police and the National Anticorruption Center. At the same time, Moldova has striven to initiate cooperation with the EU Agency dealing with judicial cooperation in criminal matters (EUROJUST) and deepen its interaction with EUROPOL (to conclude an operational agreement) and the EU Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States (FRONTEX).

On the Transnistrian dossier, the degree of EU involvement increased proportionally with Moldova's rapprochement with the EU. EU investment in Moldova's statehood and economy in itself could be part of a more complex solution to the Transnistrian dispute. A stable, pluralist, modernized, free and rule-of-law based Moldova whose citizens enjoy visa-free travel to Europe has more chances of attracting the population of Transnistria and fostering reintegration of the country. But the EU also got involved directly in an attempt to move the conflict resolution from a dead point. The EU and its member states' diplomatic support was important in restarting formal "5+2" talks in 2011. Despite Russia's obstructions, EU diplomats actively pushed for a consensus on principles and procedures of negotiations, which were ultimately agreed upon by all sides after three rounds.⁷⁰ The EU tried to engage Russia on the Transnistria issue in the larger context of security cooperation in the "common neighborhood". Germany, in spite of the "Meseberg Memorandum", agreed with Russia but failed to translate it on the EU level, because Moscow had shown little interest for substantial progress on Transnistrian issue. At the same time, the EU worked to reconnect Moldova with Transnistria. In the initial stages, the EU was actively involved in mediations on rail-traffic resumption. However, the "final aim of EU is not to mediate but to make sides talk and solve issues directly."⁷¹ Thus, in the final stage of talks on the resumption of freight railway transport via Transnistria, Chisinau and Tiraspol have spoken without intermediaries. In order to facilitate the peace process, the EU allocated €12 million for the period of 2012-2015 to support confidence building measures between Moldova and Transnistria. The EU prolonged EUBAM mission until 2014.

In the fields of foreign and security policy, the EU behind the scene encouraged Romania to sign a border regime treaty with Moldova and facilitated through EUBAM the process of border demarcation with Ukraine. The EU welcomed rapid improvement of Moldo-Romanian relations and encouraged inter-regional cooperation between Moldova

and Ukraine within the Dniester euro-region, which could encompass Transnistria. Following European good practices and implementing the IBM Moldovan and Ukrainian border guards agreed to patrol the state frontier jointly, including the Transnistrian segment, which Moldova does not control. Moldova continued to align with the majority of EU CFSP declarations; 63 out of 82 in 2011.⁷² In 2012 the EU started preliminary talks with Moldova to conclude an accord which opens CDSP missions for Moldova's participation.

Conclusions

This paper aimed to assess comparatively Russian and European neighborhood policies. It also sought to analyze comparatively how the two policies have worked in Moldova. A comparative analysis of RNP and ENP in the 'common neighborhood' and in Moldova in particular, leads to the following conclusions. Firstly, some RNP objectives are not spelled out openly, because of their disruptive nature. The ENP's objectives are set in its official documents and pursued in a transparent way. Secondly, while Russia acts to hamper state building, the EU's efforts are channeled towards democratic state building. Russia's focus is on loyal regimes' survival and disloyal regimes' change (promoting stability and instability), while instead the EU attaches importance to the regime's commitment to democratic values (not often followed consistently across the Eastern neighborhood) and is pushing for incremental systemic changes. Thirdly, although both actors look to increase their market share in the neighborhood, Russian economic expansion is mainly geopolitically driven. This is particularly visible in the energy field. While the EU seeks to guarantee its own and neighbors' energy security, Russia employs its energy policy in order to tighten its control over post-Soviet states. Fourthly, both actors tried to develop instruments which they considered to be missing from the arsenal in the neighborhood. Last but not least, Russia has striven to learn to use complementarily various levers to advance its objectives more rapidly and assertively. At the same time, the EU built over the last decade a significant presence in the "common neighborhood" and has been learning how to use these to advance its objectives in the increasingly competitive environment. The learning process for both actors is far from the end.

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RUSSIA AND THE ISSUE OF TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY IN THE POST-SOVIET STATES: THE CASES OF GEORGIA, UKRAINE AND MOLDOVA

Motto: "There is a fact which dominates in an authoritarian manner our historical movement, which like a red thread runs through all our history, which contains within itself all its philosophy, which is manifested in all periods of our social life and determines its character, which is simultaneously an essential element of our political greatness and a fundamental cause of our mental helplessness. This fact is geography."¹

P. Chaadaev

Introduction

Ever since the end of "honeymoon" relations between Moscow and West in the mid-1990s, the revival of the neo-imperial ambitions in the Russian Federation has been much discussed.² The grounds for believing that a neo-imperial policy was emerging were all the more legitimate since according to a stereotype that has won widespread recognition in Russian political thinking, stung by an awareness of contemporary Russia's weakness and its loss of a decisive say in global processes, "unless the Russian Federation is leader in its own region of the world, still less can it expect to become a power of truly global stature."³ Self-assertion in the "Near Abroad" has become something of a substitute for the superpower-status complex inherited from both the Soviet period and a remoter, pre-revolutionary era.

The invasion of Georgia in 2008 and the official recognition of separatist republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia by the Russian Federation showed explicitly the linkage between Russian policy in the "Near Abroad" and the commitment to rebuilding the country's great

power status. Russia under Vladimir Putin, and presently under Dmitri Medvedev, started a process of “regaining” control in the international arena and first of all over the “Near Abroad.” In order to achieve the objectives in both of these directions, “hard power” and other “traditional” means are employed: coercion (military intervention in Georgia, strategic military moves around the world); economic sanctions (“gas wars” with Ukraine and Moldova, “wine wars” with Georgia and Moldova, investment policy); diplomatic activities (multilateral diplomacy in international and regional organizations); aspersion and propaganda campaigns (accusations of human rights violations in the Baltic states, defending the interests of compatriots in the CIS and the Baltic states); shifting political environments in other sovereign countries (support to pro-Kremlin political parties in the CIS and Baltic states); using military presence in different regions and of the peacekeeping missions in “frozen conflicts” (Moldova, Georgia, Tajikistan);⁴ and more recently the “Humanitarian Trend” in Russian foreign policy which contains traditional elements of Russia’s actions in the “Near Abroad” (human rights, compatriots, campaigns of aspersion and propaganda, political consolidation of Russian speaking minorities), the technical/practical means to enforce these actions (consular issues, informational superiority), and new approaches of soft power (culture, education, science, public diplomacy).⁵

The case of Georgia suddenly opened the issue of territorial integrity in the post-Soviet states as a tool for Russian foreign policy strategies, especially in the similar case of the Transnistrian separatist republic of Moldova and the probably similar case of the Ukrainian region of Crimea. Recent developments in the post-Soviet states, but specifically in Georgia, interestingly impose the necessity to analyze Russian Federation foreign policy and its involvement in the “Near Abroad,” specifically from the perspective of territorial integrity.

This study is focused on territorial disputes in three former Soviet republics – Georgia (Abkhazia and South Ossetia), Ukraine (Crimea), and the Republic of Moldova (Transnistria) – and Russian Federation involvement in these issues. It aims to present the Moscow perspective on these territorial disputes, and their role in Russian Federation plans to “regain” influence in the “Near Abroad” and in the world. In other words, the article will try to explain what “great power” is, and what “imperial power” is (if there is any difference), in pursuing Russian interests in these conflicts.

The paper will also focus on how these states perceive Russian involvement in these conflicts particularly, and in their domestic affairs generally. All three states face at this moment strong pressure from Moscow since the Russian Federation's primary aims in the "Near Abroad" are to maintain its strategic position in the regions considered as part of "vital interests," in the interest of Russia's own stability, to establish stable and predictable relations with these states, and not to admit the growing influence there of any other power. But this perspective will be only collateral to the primary intention of the paper.

Which factors determined the primordality of territoriality in Russian history and politics? Why were the Russians as a nation accustomed (and why are they still) to a large sphere of action, and the absence of borders? What does the issue of territorial integrity represent in the post-Soviet sphere in Russian policies, and why does Russia consider such integrity something relative and susceptible to change? How does the Russian Federation use the problem of territorial integrity in Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova in its politics? To answer all these questions is the main aim of the present paper.

Each of the selected cases is specific in the Russian perspective of territory. The Georgian case is important for security reasons, in terms of "steppe diplomacy" as Hosking has stressed.⁶ The Ukrainian case is more complicated, since it involves not only the issue of Crimea, but also the integrity and existence of Ukraine as a whole and its importance in reconstructing Russian power. As Brzezinski stressed,

"without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire. Russia without Ukraine can still strive for imperial status, but it would then become a predominantly Asian imperial state, more likely to be drawn into debilitating conflicts with aroused Central Asians, who would then be supported by their fellow Islamic states to the south."⁷

The case of Transnistria does not affect the security of the Russian Federation directly, and it is not as important as the case of Ukraine in terms of Russia's future greatness. The integrity of Moldova is rather a piece of the puzzle in the Russian great power game, and is more related to control and influence over Moldovan, regional and European policies.

In order to understand all these issues, a glance at the place of border and territory in Russian history would be very helpful. Our primary intention here is to answer what border and territory mean in Russian

history, and how this issue influenced Russian intellectual and political thinking in the post-Soviet period.

I. Border and Territory in Russian history

"Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova and Kyrgyzstan are lost; Adzharia has fallen; Transnistria is under siege. Enemies have engaged in subversive activities in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and are approaching the gates of Belarus. Minsk is standing firm, but if it falls. The road to Moscow will be widely open."⁸ This statement by Dmitry Furman, a leading researcher at the Institute of Europe, Russian Academy of Sciences, reflects the basic perception of the Russian political and intellectual establishment, and of the majority of Russians, regarding the territory of the former Soviet Union.

Russian geopolitics has been always focused on the Russian "Near Abroad," a place with historical and cultural meanings to Russians. For the West, this semicircle of countries surrounding Russia has been of strategic interest because of its potential to contain the country. For Russia, the Near Abroad is not simply a set of areas to control for strategic reasons, but also territories that are intimately related to Russia through ties of history, economy, and culture. Thus, the imposition of borders upon "Russian" space is seen as both unnatural and impermanent. After all, Russia's international political history has always been dominated by action on her frontiers.⁹

When reflecting on Russian history we should bear in mind that there is no one single Russia in terms of territory, but rather six Russia bonded into one: Kievan Rus, Mongol Russia, Muscovite Russia, Imperial (Romanov) Russia, Soviet Russia and finally post-Soviet Russia (the Russian Federation). All of the previous five Russias left a particular legacy on the current Russian Federation in terms of identity, and probably no other nation has spent as much intellectual effort in search of its true identity as Russia.

The historical shaping of the Russian state and empire could be summarized in four major processes and trends. The first is related to the process of internal colonization in the sense of Solovyev's and Klyuchevsky's view of Russian history as a "history of a country in permanent colonization."¹⁰ The second process is the so-called "gathering of lands" initiated by Muscovite Russia starting from Ivan Kalita, which resulted in the creation of the Russian unitary state and of premises for

further extension. The third tendency which shaped the Russian sense of border and territory was Russia's constant territorial expansion in search of security, until they reached the "natural" land and sea limits. Finally, the last policy to shape Russian territory was the imperial one, mixed with messianic mission, driven by forms of the Russian "special way" either of the Tsarist triad – orthodoxy, autocracy, "narodnosti" – or the Stalinist – Communism, Party and Soviet Power. Berdeav profoundly caught this quality of the Russian character when he said that "the messianic idea runs through the whole of Russian history up to Communism."¹¹ The new and old territories were becoming a unique vital space, creating an organic unity, the Russian "core" or "oikumena", but not however a harmonious one.¹²

The "external cover" of dominance over foreign countries was needed in order to assure the invulnerability of the "core." It was intended to oppose, by all available means, the countries from West, South or East, not part of the sphere of Russian influence, so that these could not threaten the region with their material, political or ideological overtures. The maintenance of barriers and countermeasures to major external contacts, as well as the tendency to integrate into the "other" world, were *sine qua non* conditions for the survival of the "Russian idea" and its institutional basis. Here the "Russian idea" is the idea of Russian dominance over Slavic and non-Slavic ethnic groups within (more or less) the "natural borders" of the late Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, but also its political dominance over the vicinity, i.e. East-Central Europe, Central and South Asia, Mongolia and the Far East. Direct rule and geopolitical domination over this area during Russian history was not justified by some attractive model of economical development or by the Russian people's political freedom. They were explained by metaphysical qualities – Russian spiritual superiority and universality, which all nations which became parts of the Empire should accept *a priori* as a gift of God (or of "World revolution").¹³

Looking at the issue of territory as the main feature of any state, we have to stress that in Russian terms, the tragedy of 1991 was not that some administrative borders became state and national borders. The problem resulted from the idea that Russia, which during the twentieth century bore the name Soviet Union (and was earlier known as the Russian Empire), as a united body, united culture, and united civilization, was split into many parts.

The territory of a nation has a meaning beyond the political power accruing from its control of the land. The history of a nation, its struggles,

conflicts, defining moments, and tragedies all happen in particular places that not only shape the character of those places, but also the character of the nation. Consequently, territory is a vital component of national identity as an emotive source of imagining the nation. Scholars working on territory perceive a fundamental problem relating to the location of national boundaries when territory is thought of as “space to which identity is attached by a distinct group who hold or covet that territory and who desire to fully control it for the group’s benefit.”¹⁴ Such a conception of territory tends to encourage the social construction of national boundaries that do not necessarily match state borders. In this sense, Russian territorial consciousness extends beyond the country’s present borders, and “Russia” and “Russian identity” are not confined within the space of the present Russian Federation. Thus, the breakup of the Soviet Union was not simply the collapse of a communist regime, but also the dissolution of the Russian Empire.

1.1. A glance at the post-Soviet period

The collapse of the Soviet Union generated new mental maps for Russians, maps that do not always match the contemporary political map of state borders. Such imaginings of Russia are frequently connected to beliefs about what sort of country Russia is and should be, how Russia is viewed by the rest of the world, and how it is shaped by Russian foreign policy objectives.¹⁵

Post-Soviet intellectual and political debates and orientations regarding the Russian state/imperial power and territory were differently grouped by scholars who variously assess their impact on the politics of post-Soviet Russia. For instance, Alexei Arbatov has defined four broad foreign policy positions within Russia, which vary in terms of influence but span all the major institutions engaged in policy formulation: a pro-Western group; moderate liberals (pragmatists); moderate conservatives; the radical left and right.¹⁶ Malinova considers that the theme of “imperial” and “post-imperial” projects is very present in current Russian political discourse in at least two forms: among “imperial nationalists” and in “liberal discourse.”¹⁷ The former treat the borders of “new empire” in different ways, but usually think in terms of the restoration of the Soviet Union. Prokhanov speaks about the “Fifth Empire” and considers that “CIS countries will rot outside the imperial body”;¹⁸ Zhirinovsky pledges “reunification of the territories carved from Russia” (especially for Slavic

peoples), but views Russian expansion in terms of a "last assault to South", i.e. to the Indian Ocean.¹⁹ The liberal vision of empire is not so much imbued with the "gathering of territories" rhetoric, but with Russia's "natural" leadership in the CIS, considered "vital" for its greatness²⁰.

According to Sidorov, there are also post-imperial "Third Rome" projects in post-Soviet Russia, resurrecting a Russian Orthodox geopolitical metaphor.²¹ He considers its reincarnations in various contemporary Russian geopolitical ideologies, such as "Orthodox Nationalism/Fundamentalism," "Geo-apocalypitics of the Postmodern," "Neo-Panslavism," "Statism/Eurounionism," "Neo-Eurasianism," "New Chronology," and "Neo-Orthodox Communism." For Nazarov, one proponent of this trend, the only legitimate basis for establishing limits to the Third Rome must be the boundary of the Russian Empire as of 2nd March 1917, when the last legitimate authority was interrupted. For the three Baltic republics, Russia should recognize their peoples' choice for independence, but not their boundaries; the Transnistrian republic of Moldova is a Russian territory, etc.²²

O'Loughlin and Talbot have also proposed a systematization for Russian intellectual and political visions of territory and empire, considering them as "Westernizing Nationalism," "Moderate Eurasianism," and "Extreme Eurasianism."²³ According to the authors. Westernizing Nationalism has no territorial aspirations, since any expansion of Russia would conflict with the clearly expressed wish to assert Russia's place in Europe and the Western world. Moderate Eurasianists do not have a single territorial vision but want, at a minimum, a return of the Slavic states of Belarus and Ukraine to Russia. Other moderates favor a complete reunification of the Soviet Union. A distinguishing attitude toward territory, however, is that moderate Eurasianists reject the notion of a forced reconstitution of the Soviet Union and hope for a voluntary reunification. Extreme Eurasianists view all of the former Soviet Union as part of Russia.²⁴

How do all these reflections and debates influence and shape Russian politics in terms of power and influence, and how they alter the territorial *status quo* established after 1991?

In the first three years after the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia's official policy toward its neighbors evolved from isolation to active engagement and reintegration, at the same time as Russia discovered a new language of self-determination for its compatriot communities in the "Near Abroad." In this sense, Russian state-building and Russian empire-building overlap, remaining ambiguous, opaque, elusive, difficult to define²⁵.

Events in Russia and the republics during 1992 necessitated some serious adjustments in the understanding of Russia's role and place in the post-Soviet sphere; in particular events in the Transnistrian region of Moldova in 1992, when for the first time ethnic Russians were drawn into military action, pushed Russians out of their inward-looking policy and drove them to involvement in the territories of the "Near Abroad".

It is generally accepted that the Russian Federation's post-Soviet "honeymoon" in relations with the West, especially the United States, came to an end in the mid-1990s. One supporting argument is that as a result of marginalization in the West, Russia increasingly turned its attention to the former Soviet republics – the "Near Abroad."²⁶ A wide range of factors were mentioned to explain this shift: the necessity to strength economic ties with the Commonwealth of Independent States; a strong interest in the fate of ethnic Russians, 25 million of whom found themselves outside the Russian Federation and imploring protection; border issues such as Crimea and to a lesser extent north Kazakhstan; and the threat of Islamic fundamentalism.²⁷

Nevertheless there is evidence that a shift toward the former Soviet republics occurred early. Of all the arguments outlined above, the most important in our case is how the interests of Russia in defending ethnic Russians overlapped with the pursuit of Russian state/empire building in the "Near Abroad."

Discussions of the emergence of the "Near Abroad" policy usually cite Andranik Migranian, Yeltsin's adviser for security, who early in 1992 said that

"as a result of miscalculations in assessing the role and place of Russia and the deep-seated nature of relations between Russia and the countries of the near abroad, officials of the Russian Foreign Ministry and other political leaders in the country drew the strategically erroneous conclusion that Russia should turn inward, within the borders of the Russian federation, get out of all the former USSR republics, and not interfere in interethnic and regional conflicts in the former Union, thereby openly and publicly renouncing any special rights and interests in the post-Soviet sphere outside the Russian Federation."

According to him, events that occurred in Russia and in the republics during 1992 necessitated serious adjustments in the understanding of Russia's role and place in the post-Soviet sphere, and a significant portion

of the political establishment started to realize more and more clearly that Russia had a special role in the post-Soviet sphere.²⁸

In particular events in the Transnistrian region of Moldova in 1992, when for the first time ethnic Russians were drawn into military action, pushed Russians out of their inward-looking policy.²⁹ Other problems were Baltic citizenship restrictions, the conflict with Ukraine over the Crimea, over the former Soviet Fleet and the policy of "Ukrainization," massive out-migration of Russians from Central Asia and Transcaucasia, and the widespread perception of Russia's artificial borders; all these stimulated the shift from an inward-looking policy in the Russian Federation toward the "Near Abroad."³⁰ So-called neo-authoritarian representatives of Russian foreign policy stressed that the problems cited above, as well as security guarantees, imposed on Russia the necessity to become the center for reintegration of the former Soviet republics.³¹

The 1992 Foreign Policy Concept explicitly points out that in the emerging new system of international relations, the Russian Federation remains a great power in terms of its potential, its influence and its responsibility to create a new system of positive relations among the states that used to make up the Soviet Union, and that it is the guarantor of stability for these relations.³²

Even though the basic contours of Russia's policy towards the "Near Abroad" were already in place well before the December 1993 elections, the strong showing of nationalists and neo-communists during the elections explicitly stressed Russian geopolitical interests throughout the region. Both V. Zhirinovskiy and E. Zyuganov, leaders of the Russian Liberal Democrats and Communists respectively, took a very active role in shaping intellectual and political discourse regarding the "vital interests" of Russia in its geographic proximity.

In January 1994, in his opening speech to the new Federation Council, Boris Yeltsin stressed Russia's destiny as "a great power" and as "first among equals" among the former Soviet republics.³³ At the same time Russian officials drew a distinction between a "great power" and an "imperial power": the first was about the legitimate pursuit of state interests towards its neighbors within the norms and expectations of the state system, the second was a policy of domination standing outside those norms. Within the post-Soviet context, however, the distinction between the legitimate pursuit of state interests and empire-building is entirely nebulous and is likely to remain so for a long time. Very suggestive in this sense was the statement of Alexander Rutskoy, Vice-President of the Russia Federation,

when he said in 1994 that “the peoples of the former Soviet Union are destined by the Lord God himself to live as one family, one nation, one state – a great power.”³⁴

Although “post-imperial” territorial ambitions are usually ably “hidden” in the discourses and actions of the Russia political classes, and not invoked to legitimize the political course, many of the Kremlin’s arguments can be attributed to the diversity of intellectual opinions and trends mentioned above.

The main purpose of Putin’s political reform was announced as the creation of a strong state. Analysis of Putin’s speeches reveals that his perception of a “strong state” explicitly contains the imperial archetypes. In his 2003 Address to the Federal Assembly, the Russian President stressed that the historical heroism of Russia and its citizens lay in “maintaining the state on the grand stage, in keeping with the unique community of nation with strong positions in the world.”³⁵ In his May 2004 Address, Putin announced the integration of the post-Soviet sphere as a priority direction for Russian foreign policy. “Our priority is to work on deepening integration in the CIS, including the Common Economic Space and the Eurasian Economic Community.”

Earlier, on 12th February, 2004, he declared that

“The breakup of the Soviet Union is a national tragedy on an enormous scale, from which only the elites and nationalists of the republics gained. . . I think that ordinary citizens of the former Soviet Union and the post-Soviet sphere gained nothing from this.”³⁶

Respecting the independence of the new post-Soviet states, Putin has always spoken of the importance of integration processes in this area, stressing his concern for the status of Russian-speaking minorities in these states. In 2005, for instance, he declared the necessity to continue “the Russian nation’s mission of civilization on the Eurasian continent.”³⁷

As we stressed at the beginning of the paper, Russia’s self-assertion in the “Near Abroad” has become something of a substitute for the superpower-status complex inherited from both the Soviet period and a remoter, pre-revolutionary, era and Russia’s ability to control the territory of the “Near Abroad” is considered to be one of the main arguments that grant Russia the status of regional or even world power (and probably will continue to grant this in the near future). But this is not the only explanation of Russian influence in the “Near Abroad.” Russia experiences a dichotomy

in relations with the former Soviet republics, which determines the main dilemma of Moscow policy in the “Near Abroad”: how to find a balance between addressing these as absolute sovereign states, and maintaining “special relationships” with them. Post-imperial historical realities have shown that there are two options when a large country is surrounded by small, weak countries: either the great power conquers and dominates them, or these states become strong enough to resist, unifying their own resources and external support, and thereby containing and exhausting the great power potential. Fear of domination pushes small countries to create containment barriers and seek support from other powers, while fear of hostile encirclement, of isolation and of external involvement pushes the great power to extend its own influence over neighbor states.

The dynamic interrelation between these two models over five centuries has been the paradigm of Russian/Soviet empire evolution, its colonized territories and surroundings³⁸ Russia considers the former Soviet republics as internally deeply unstable, open to outside influence, and riven by confrontation between themselves, with their own separatist regions or with Russia itself. In this sense, Russia’s great dilemma is how to prevent post-Soviet states from creating a hostile surrounding (or any kind of *cordon sanitaire*), and how to impede their transformation into a sphere of economical and political influence, and potentially of military presence, for other great regional and global powers and alliances.

Case studies of Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova are relevant in explaining these paradigms.

II. Caucasian conundrum: why recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia?

In spite of the historical, cultural, and economic ties between Georgia and the Russian Federation, tensions between the two states amount to a long-standing political problem that has various sources. The new Georgia starts with the period of perestroika and glasnost, a fateful attempt to liberalize the Soviet political regime undertaken by the last Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev from 1985 on. Georgians used the opportunities provided by the new liberties to launch a national independence movement, which mobilized the public around the slogan of independence from the Soviet Union. The inevitable tensions with the Communist authorities came tragically to a head in the early morning of

9th April, 1989, when the Soviet army dispersed a huge pro-independence rally, leaving twenty people, mostly young women, dead. This tragic event represented the moral death of the Communist regime in Georgia: its legitimacy was fatally injured and never recovered.

The emergence of Georgian nationalism was paralleled by the development of a counter-nationalist agenda in the autonomous regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The Abkhazians and Ossetians formed their own nationalist movements and demanded secession from Georgia. As in many other multi-ethnic countries, an attempt at democratic transition created challenges to the unity of the country. The Soviet authorities, concerned with a rising nationalist movement for an independent Georgia, had a vested interest in encouraging and supporting anti-Tbilisi movements with a weakening effect within Georgia.

For years, Russia has attempted to present the conflicts within Georgian territory (as well as in Moldova) as inter-national confrontation and “ethnic conflicts.” Very successful at the beginning of 1990s, this approach soon lost its relevance.

For decades, the main issue in Russian-Georgian relations has been connected to two problems – first, Russia’s interest in preserving its control in CIS countries; and second, its interests in two separatist regions of Georgia – Abkhazia and Ossetia. In the last official census of South Ossetia, conducted in 1989, before the outbreak of hostilities, the South Ossetian Autonomous District had a population of just under 100,000 people, with 66% ethnic Ossetians and 29% Georgians.³⁹ On 9th December, 1990, the newly elected Ossetian Supreme Council proclaimed the South Ossetian Republic, which could well be interpreted as secession from Georgia, or at least a step in that direction. In July 1992, the Russia-brokered peace deal ended hostilities in South Ossetia, creating the first zone of “frozen conflict” in Georgia: most of South Ossetia remained under control of the separatist Government, and the ceasefire was monitored by the tripartite Georgian-Russian-Ossetian peacekeeping forces.⁴⁰

According to the 1989 Soviet census, the Abkhaz population was approximately 525,100 and consisted of the following ethnic groups: 45.7% Georgians, 17.8% Abkhazians, 14.6% Armenians, 14.2% Russians. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Abkhaz separatists sought to secede from Georgia by force, which in terms of ethnic composition would be impossible without Russian external assistance. The Abkhaz Supreme Soviet declared its sovereignty on July 23rd 1992

and had procured the support of Russian forces stationed in military bases located in Georgian territory.⁴¹

Having sustained heavy losses and the forcible expulsion of approximately 300,000 of its citizens from Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the years after the dissolution of the USSR, Georgia was left with no practical option but to accept Russian demands and to join the CIS in order to end the conflict. On 24th June, 1992, Georgia and the South Ossetian insurgents signed the Sochi Agreement. On 1st December, 1993, Georgia and the Abkhaz insurgents signed a Memorandum of Understanding in Geneva, and on 9th December, 1993, Georgia became an official member of the CIS. On May 14, 1994, the Abkhaz separatists and the Georgian government signed the Moscow Agreement on Ceasefire and Separation of Forces. The agreement was endorsed by a decision of CIS heads of state on 22nd August, 1994, which prescribed that Russian CIS peacekeepers would be stationed in the region alongside UN forces.⁴²

Since then, Russia has increased its influence in separatist regions by providing citizenship and various forms of support. The international recognition of Kosovo in February 2008, combined with Georgia's expression of its intention to seek NATO membership at the Bucharest Summit in April of 2008, intensified efforts by the Russian Federation to establish South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent, ethnically homogenous territories. In this sense, the Georgian case is the first successful one for Russia in using territorial integrity in a combined strategy of security, neo-imperial ambitions and great power stance looking for international affirmation as a regional and world power.

During his address to the 42nd Munich Security Conference in February 2007, President Putin challenged the existing model of Russia's relations with the West, whereby Russia had been denied its opinion and interests since the end of the Cold War.⁴³ The address symbolically marked the opening of a new phase in Russian foreign policy, which may be referred to as revisionist, as it fundamentally challenged the current formula for relations with the West, both globally and regionally (especially with regard to the "Near Abroad").⁴⁴

The 2008 war in Georgia was one step toward changing this status-quo. One of Russia's fundamental aims was to prevent any further political, economic and institutional rapprochement between Georgia and the West. The use of armed force was intended to demonstrate Russia's determination in the defense of its influence in the "Near Abroad," and to stress the weakness and helplessness of the West, and especially the

United States, which proved unable either to stop Russia or to provide any help to Georgia. The Russian Federation wanted to demonstrate that the post-Soviet sphere was in fact within its zone of influence, and that Russia would not tolerate any excessive growth of Western influence here.⁴⁵ At the same time, it was a classical imperial military action, resulting in the territorial disintegration of a neighboring country in order to create personal territorial benefits and regional and global influence.

The recognition of Abkhazian and South Ossetian independence on 26th August, 2008 was the next step in this direction. In September 2008 Russia signed a number of treaties with the newly recognized republics, providing for Russian assistance in the event of aggression, and preventing the extension of international observer missions. As a result of Russia's actions, the OSCE mission in Georgia expired in December 2008, and the UN mission in July 2009.

It was no accident that the Russians invaded Georgia on 8th August, 2008, following a Georgian attack on South Ossetia. To understand Russian thinking, we need to look at two events. The first is the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. From the U.S. and European point of view, the Orange Revolution represented a triumph of democracy and Western influence. From the Russian point of view, as Moscow made clear, the Orange Revolution was a CIA-funded intrusion into Ukraine's internal affairs, designed to draw Ukraine into NATO and add to the encirclement of Russia. U.S. Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton had promised the Russians that NATO would not expand into the former Soviet Union empire.

The second and lesser event was the decision by Europe and the United States to back Kosovo's separation from Serbia. The Russians were friendly with Serbia, but the deeper issue for Russia was this: The principle of Europe since World War II was that, to prevent conflict, national borders would not be changed. If that principle were violated in Kosovo, other border shifts — including demands by various regions for independence from Russia — might follow. The Russians publicly and privately asked that Kosovo not be given formal independence, but instead continue its informal autonomy, which was the same thing in practical terms. Russia's requests were ignored. If Kosovo could be declared independent under Western sponsorship, then South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the two breakaway regions of Georgia, could be declared independent under Russian sponsorship. Any objections from the United States and Europe would simply confirm their hypocrisy.

In the period after the war, Russian President Dmitri Medvedev stated Russian foreign policy in five succinct points, called the “Medvedev Doctrine.” In the last two points, Medvedev declared that

“protecting the lives and dignity of our citizens, wherever they may be, is an unquestionable priority for our country. Our foreign policy decisions will be based on this need. We will also protect the interests of our business community abroad. It should be clear to all that we will respond to any aggressive acts committed against us.”

In the last point he made clear that like other countries, there are regions where Russia has privileged interests. “These regions are home to countries with which we share special historical relations and are bound together as friends and good neighbors. We will pay a particular attention to our work in these regions and will build friendly ties with these countries, our close neighbors,” the Russian president declared. According to George Friedman, the fourth point provides a doctrinal basis for intervention in other countries if Russia finds it necessary, and the fifth point is critical because it actually states that Russians have special interests in the former Soviet Union and in friendly relations with these states. “Intrusions by others that undermine pro-Russian regimes in these regions will be regarded as a threat to Russia’s ‘special interest.’”⁴⁶

But in long-term strategy the official recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia by the Russian Federation was a demonstration of the Russian political elite’s incapacity to transform the post-Soviet sphere according to modern principles of influence and power. The 26th August act attested to the old Russian imperial paradigm of action in the post-Soviet sphere adapted to new realities – the separation and annexation of new territories. Could similar scenarios be expected in the different cases of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova? The logic of Russian political action suggests that the Russian Federation has no other strategies at the moment than to erode the territorial integrity of the neighboring states in order to achieve its geopolitical goals.

III. Ukraine: national identity, territorial integrity and geopolitical interests

The Russian Federation's attitude toward Ukraine's territorial integrity is shaped by several historical and political aspects. The first point is that Ukraine's independence as such is regarded in Russia as abnormal, a historical error and as such a temporary issue to be solved by the absorption of Ukraine into Russia. This vision is deeply influenced by the ethnic, linguistic, cultural and historical community of these Slavic nations, and partially by Russian perception of the Ukrainian nation as something artificial, and as a result inconsistent, in terms of history.⁴⁷

At the beginning of the post-Soviet period, historic relations between Ukraine and Russia were too little understood, and the most common misperceptions lead to the formulation of all manner of mistaken policies and judgments. In a highly relevant article concerning the making of post-Soviet history of Ukraine, entitled very suggestively "Does Ukraine Have a History?", von Hagen considers that fluidity of borders, cultural permeability, and a historically multi-ethnic society could make Ukrainian history a very "modern" field of research.⁴⁸ Indeed, as such the making of modern Ukraine should be viewed in an international context – the first Russian nation-builders wanted the Ukrainians to be Russian; Polish nation-builders wanted "their" Ukrainians to be Polish – and the national identity of modern Ukrainians was formulated by those who, in defining Ukraine, rejected both the Russian identity and the Polish identity.⁴⁹

Since in this case we are only interested in the Russian perception, several crucial moments in history influence the Russian view of Ukrainian territory. The first such moment is that, historically speaking, the roots of Ukraine grow from Kievan Rus, a legacy claimed by Russians and Belarusians as well, a situation close to that of France and Germany, which contest the legacy of the Carolingian Empire. Russia views Kievan Rus as one and the same with Muscovite Russia, and in terms of unity between Russians and Ukrainians, while Ukrainian historical narratives treat it as the beginning of Ukrainian statehood (starting from the "father" of Ukrainian historiography Mykhailo Hrushevsky), but especially of the Halych-Volhyn kingdom, perceived by the modern Ukrainian historians as part of Ukrainian history.⁵⁰

The second moment of the Russian-Ukrainian dispute is the treaty of 1654, when Bohdan Khmelnytsky signed an act of union with Russia. After the Polish-Russian war, in 1667 most territories of present Ukraine

were divided between Poland and Russia, and therefore a part of that vast territory - today's regions of Poltava and Chernihiv, with the city of Kiev – came under Muscovite rule.⁵¹ Today each country regards the union of 1654 from opposite viewpoints – as a positive action in Russia, and as negative in Ukraine.

The Russian view of Ukrainian territory is also shaped by the fact of that Ukrainians have existed under Russian influence for three and a half centuries. Szporluk's reflections are very suggestive in dismantling this argumentation, suggesting that only a small part of Ukraine was historically indeed under such control.⁵² Most historians focused on the history of Ukrainians during the Russian Empire stressed that the rejection of Ukrainian identity, considered to be part of the Russian people and treated as Little Russians ("Malorossy"), for a long time influenced the Russian perception of "historical unity" of these territories.⁵³

As result of Stalinist imperial conquests in Eastern Europe during the Second World War, for the first time in their history Ukrainians were united into a single state and it was mainly Soviet rule which accomplished the endeavors of the Ukrainians nationalists of all persuasions to unify "all Ukrainian lands." From this point of view, it is very complicated to sum up the Soviet legacy in terms of positive or negatives, or in terms of relations with Russia. It has been suggested that, as elsewhere in the former Soviet Union, in Ukraine the "infection" of anti-Stalinism spread to a critique of the entire Soviet period, characteristically treated after independence as a regime of occupation, presenting the Russians as historical enemies. However, the current boundaries of Ukraine are one legacy of the Soviet, and even Stalinist, period, which played a crucial role in the unification of the Western and Eastern parts of Ukraine as well as of Crimea.⁵⁴

Starting from this assertion, the Russian perception of Ukrainian territorial integrity is easily understandable. "Fraternal help" in fulfilling Ukrainian territorial aspirations during the Second World war represents a kind of legitimization for the Russian Federation to interfere in Ukrainian affairs, especially in those related to territories considered "Russian" (Odessa, Crimea et c.) and to the Russian-speaking minority. Not to speak of the historical "unity" of these two nations, and more recently of Ukraine's geopolitical importance for the Russian Federation. In other words, Russia unconditionally views Ukraine as part of the "core," profoundly unstable, exposed to external pressures and influences, and as such to be returned to the "Russian world."

However, Ukraine has emerged and exists as a state, and Russia must somehow deal with this reality. The most controversial and heated disputes between the two Slavic nations after the dissolution of the Soviet Union were related to the issue of Crimea, to the status of Sevastopol, to the problem of the Kerch strait and to the demarcation of borders on land and at sea.

In 1991-1992 many Russian politicians publicly expressed doubts regarding the territorial integrity of Ukraine, and especially regarding the legitimacy of Ukrainian possession of Crimea, which Khrushchev transferred to the Ukrainian SSR in 1954 in recognition of the "unshaken friendship" between the two peoples. Even Solzhenitsyn, reflecting on these issues, said that "In 1919, Lenin annexed to Ukraine some Russian territories which had never in history belonged to Ukraine: the south and eastern part of present-day Ukraine. In 1954 Khrushchev, on a tyrannical and abusively fad whim, made as a 'gift' to Ukraine of the Crimea."⁵⁵

The particular territorial status of Ukraine in the twentieth century made the issue of its integrity very sensitive and controversial after independence. At the beginning of the 1990s, movements emerged in many parts of Ukraine which directly or indirectly pushed the idea of creating autonomous or even independent political and territorial units.⁵⁶ Three of these movements were Russian-inspired or related to the principles of the "Russian world," and were used by the Russian Federation as part of the "Near Abroad" territorial strategy. One of the principles which unified the movements in their demands was the "federalization" of Ukraine against the principle of a "unitary" state, promoted by Kiev.

The first case is that of the Donbas region, where in autumn of 1990, soon after Ukraine proclaimed its sovereignty, the "Interdvizhenie" movement emerged for the region's separation from Ukraine and unification with the Soviet Union if Ukraine did not sign the new Union agreement (the situation in Moldova was similar, with the Transnistrian region). After the independence of Ukraine, the movement focused on "defending the rights of the Russian language" and called for territorial autonomy in the region. In March 1994 a referendum was organized to recognize Russian as a state language and transform Ukraine into a federative state, with 90% voting "yes." The effects of this decision were soon mitigated when local politicians joined Ukrainian political jostling, but the region remained an important center of Russian influence, with various implications for Ukrainian political, economical and territorial integrity.

In 1990 separatist rhetoric also emerged among the Odessa intelligentsia, concentrated on the so-called “Novorossia” project to create a Southern Autonomous Region (including the Odessa, Mykolaev, Kherson, Zaporozhe and Dnepropetrovsk regions) in federative Ukraine, based on a distinct ethnicity in this region.⁵⁷

The most serious testing for the new Ukrainian state was however the Crimean problem, the only case of separatism that threatened its territorial integrity.

The Crimean issue reflects several sensitive aspects of post-Soviet Russia and relations with Ukraine. The majority of the Crimean population are Russians; here was located the Soviet Black Sea fleet, considered strategically important for projecting Russian influence in the Black Sea Region; Crimea and Sevastopol are vital components of Russian national identity and an emotive source of imagining the glorious past of the Russian people and army. The very fact of this presence within a foreign country deeply affected Russian patriotic feelings, their perception of a unitary nation, of military power and national pride.⁵⁸ At the same time, Crimean separatism followed an internal agenda set by the overlapping interests of local Soviet *nomenklatura*, various criminal groups, the Tatar population who were returning “home,” and of the new central power from Kiev and local power-brokers.⁵⁹

The situation was complicated by the relative ideological, political and economic weakness of the central government in Kiev, but especially by the direct involvement of Russian political forces and institutions. In other words, as in the case of Georgia and the Republic of Moldova, the Crimean problem was caused by the fragility of the Ukrainian state and the ambitions of the Russian Federation in the “Near Abroad.”

In 1990 a republican movement in emerged in Crimea led by Yuri Meshkov, which invoking the prospects of “Ukrainization” and formulated the idea of re-establishing “Crimean autonomy” (identical to the case of Transnistria, which had existed as a separate autonomic republic prior to merging with Bessarabia).⁶⁰ In January 1991, before the Soviet referendum regarding the preservation of the Union, a regional referendum was organized in Crimea, where 93.3% of population voted for the creation of a Crimean Republic within the Soviet Union. The process was similar to the cases of the Transnistrian and Gagauz Republics in 1990 in the Republic of Moldova (as well as of Abkhazia in Georgia) and was a signal from Moscow on the necessity of obedience and of tempering the rhythm of “sovereignty.”

On 12th February, 1991 the Supreme Soviet of Ukraine adopted a law re-establishing the Crimean ASSR within the Ukrainian SSR, which was considered inappropriate since “re-establishing” Crimean autonomy was possible only within the RSFSR.⁶¹

In 1992 a confrontation of priorities began between the central government and local authorities; on 29th April, the Supreme Rada adopted a law on the “Status of the Crimean Autonomous Republic” and a law regarding the office of president in the Autonomy, and in turn on 5th May 1992 the Supreme Soviet of Crimea adopted a law regarding the “Proclamation of state independence of the Crimean Republic.” The next day the constitution of the Crimean republic was adopted, under which the new state had the right to an independent foreign policy, its own juridical and political organs, and possession of all republican resources. The decisions of the Soviet Supreme were to be adopted by a republican referendum.

The conflict was highlighted by Russian Federation intervention. In January 1992 the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation raised the question of legitimacy when the Crimean region was handed over to Ukraine in 1954. In April, during his visit to Crimea, the vice-president of the Russian Federation, A. Rutskoy, called for secession of Crimea from Ukraine. After the Supreme Rada decided on 13th May, 1991 to consider the decisions of the Crimean authorities unconstitutional, the Russian Duma responded on 21st May 1992 by considering the 5th February, 1954 decision of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR regarding the transfer of Crimea to Ukraine as “having no juridical sense from the moment of adoption.” At the same time, the Soviet Supreme of the Russian Federation started discussions regarding the status of Sevastopol, and Commander-in-Chief Kasatonov of the Black Sea fleet announced that Sevastopol was a privileged location for Russian military forces.

Negotiations between Kiev and Simferopol ended with a moratorium on referendum and on 25th September, 1992 a new constitution of autonomy was adopted, where Crimea was ambiguously stressed as “a state being part of Ukraine”. However, the Crimean parliament adopted a law on state flags under which the Crimean flag was identical to the Russian one. Many other decisions generated supplementary tensions between center and local authority, such as the issue of special citizenship rights for the people of Crimea (Ukrainian laws allow only one citizenship), the declaration of Russian as the state language of autonomy, the adoption of presidency for Crimea in 1993. In April 1993, Russian deputy Agafonov

announced that Russia was ready to support a referendum on separating Crimea from Ukraine and integrating the republic into the CIS as an independent state. In July the Supreme Soviet confirmed the "Russian federal status of Sevastopol" and ordered the Russian government to elaborate a state program for "implementation of the special status of Sevastopol." Russian political tactics in Crimea only ended officially in February 1994, when Vladimir Chernomyrdin, prime-minister of the Russian Federation, announced that the Russian Federation no longer had claims against Ukraine.

The crisis continued however, confirming the existence of an internal dynamic to political life. Elections for the presidency on 4th February, 1994 were won by the leader of the political block "Rossiya," Yuri Meshkov, who promised independence for Crimea and integration into the Russian rouble zone. His block also won parliamentary elections in April 1994, and during the election a referendum was organized where 90% of population supported the idea of extended autonomy rights for Crimea. Meshkov issued laws which subordinated local military and police forces to his power, created a personal presidential guard, announced the intention to introduce the Russian rouble as Crimean currency and initiated negotiations on a separate treaty between Crimea and the Russian Federation. The stance against Kiev culminated when Meshkov appointed a Russian citizen as head of Crimean government and introduced Moscow time in Crimea (which is one hour ahead of Ukrainian). One of the factors which stimulated emergent separatist tendencies in Crimea was the massive return of Crimean Tatars. At the end of 1993, more than 250,000 Tatars returned to their motherland, where conflicts started regarding the restitution and division of land.⁶²

The situation was very critical at this point and on 1st June, 1994, President Kravchuk declared in the Ukrainian Rada that "*de jure* Crimea belongs to Ukraine, but *de facto* we lost it."⁶³

Russian politicians further supported manifestations of Crimean separatism, when in October 1994 the head of the Russian Duma Committee for CIS, Zatulin, again declared the transfer of Crimea to Ukraine in 1954 illegal.

The new elected president in 1994, Leonid Kuchma, came to power mainly due to his promises to improve relations with the Russian Federation and defend the status of the Russian language. Due to this stance, he succeeded in putting an end to the Russian separatist movement in Crimea. In 1995, Kuchma took advantage of an internal political conflict

and dismissed Meshkov, and next year he abolished the presidency of Crimea entirely. In 1996 the Ukrainian constitution was adopted, which contained some articles relating to Crimean autonomy, and Crimean separatism was officially ended.

The Russian Federation officially recognized the territorial integrity of the Ukrainian state in the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership (the so-called "Great Treaty"), signed on 31st May, 1997, which in turn permitted Russian military presence until 2017. The treaty was harshly criticized in Russia, especially the recognition of Crimea and Sevastopol as Ukrainian, and since then there have been many calls to renounce it.

Ukraine's historical and geopolitical importance to Russia has however demonstrated that the Russian Federation is far from accepting and recognizing the problem of its territorial integrity. The turning point of this issue was the Ukrainian Orange Revolution of 2004, which among many other explanations, contained a profound separation of the country between Russian-speaking, industrial "South-East" Ukraine and more rural, Ukrainian-speaking "Central-West" Ukraine. This separation is determined by the "two" Ukraine's preferences in external orientation – the Eastern part preferring to be framed more in the post-Soviet sphere, while the Western part articulates a pro-European and Atlantic orientation.

Moscow spent the next six years working to reverse the outcome, operating both openly and covertly to split the coalition and create a pro-Russian government. In the 2010 elections, V. Yanukovich returned to power, and from the Russian point of view, the danger of losing Ukraine was averted. Russian behavior in the "Near Abroad" suggests that the Kremlin is content to allow Ukraine its internal sovereignty and to grant its territorial integrity, so long as Ukraine does not become a threat to Russia and does not pose challenges to its perception of Ukraine as part of the Russian "vital space."

IV. Russia and the Issue of Territorial Integrity in the Republic of Moldova

The Republic of Moldova was never an independent political entity before 1991. Its fate was inextricably linked to that of the Romanian Principalities, the Ottoman Empire, the Russian Empire, Romania and more recently the Soviet Union. Prior to 1812, the current territory of Moldova

was part of the Romanian Principality of Moldova, whose emergence dates to 1359. After the Russian-Ottoman war of 1806-1812, for most of the nineteenth century and up until 1917, Moldova, historically known as Bessarabia, was part of the Russian Empire.⁶⁴ At the same time, the core of the Romanian Principality of Moldova joined Wallachia in 1859 and formed the modern Romanian state. After World War I, Bessarabia returned to Romania and for twenty-two years was part of the Romanian state. Bessarabia became part of the Soviet sphere of influence following the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939, when Soviet troops invaded and occupied in 1940; it returned to Romania in 1941, and was re-occupied by the USSR from 1944 to 1991.

On 2nd August, 1940, the Soviet Union created the Moldovan SSR, a result of joining Bessarabia and the Moldovan ASSR (created by the Soviets in 1924 within the Ukrainian SSR).

These territorial and political fluctuations, together with the peripheral position that it had in the states that took part, have strongly affected Moldova's evolution and stability in the twentieth century and especially after 1991. These changes in geographical and political landscape are often portrayed as a constant shift from West to East and back, but in fact the clash over this territory was a very specific confrontation between Romanian nationalism, which wanted to "bring home" its lost sons, and Russian/Soviet imperialism, which was driven by geopolitical strategies in controlling Moldova. The confrontation left a particular legacy on the current political and national physiognomy of the Republic of Moldova, and the issue of borders and identity is basically the main problem of its post-independence history.

Since Soviet-era boundaries are the main foundation on which newly independent Moldova must build its new political and national identity, an analysis of the effect of Soviet nationalities policy in the Moldovan SSR would be very helpful for understanding current realities in the Republic of Moldova.

IV.1. Historical Boundaries – Soviet Boundaries

The Soviet understanding of nationhood was firmly based on the Stalinist linkage between a nationality, its territory and its indigenous political elite. Further, it is well known that under Stalin's own definition of nation, Soviet authorities promoted an idea of nation as fixed to territory. Major ethnic groups were assigned their officially recognized

territories and organized into an elaborate administrative hierarchy of ethnic stratification, in which the fifteen Soviet republics represented the highest rank of statehood accessible to a Soviet nationality.⁶⁵

Even though scholars of Soviet nationalities assert that the Piedmont principle was not a major Soviet motivation in policies of nation-building, they admit that in a single exceptional case – that of the Moldovan Autonomous SSR – this principle was the main reason for the creation of a Soviet republic.⁶⁶

Since the Soviet Union never recognised the annexation of Bessarabia to Romania, the Soviets created great pressure on the Romanian authorities by organizing, training, and financing subversive action in Bessarabia. This pressure included the creation of the Moldovan ASSR inside the Ukrainian SSR in 1924, in what Zatonsky called “our own Moldovan Piedmont.”⁶⁷ Despite its small size and dubious Moldovan ethnic character (the Moldovans represented 31.6% of the Moldovan ASSR, while Ukrainians were 49.6%⁶⁸), the newly created republic of Moldova received the status of an autonomous republic because of its future political perspectives, i.e. the eventual annexation of Bessarabia. For the same reason, despite protest from Romanian Communists, a distinct Moldovan literary language was forged in the Moldovan ASSR, and a separate Moldovan national identity cultivated.⁶⁹

The Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic was created by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on 2nd August, 1940, allegedly on the initiative of the majority of working people in the region.⁷⁰ Roughly speaking, the Moldovan SSR was created by joining together historical Bessarabia and the Moldovan ASSR, but not in their entirety - only six from the total of thirteen *rayons* of the Moldovan ASSR were annexed to the Moldovan SSR.

As usual the Soviets did not follow any ethnic, historic or cultural logic in creating the new republic, but only strategic considerations. As a result three counties of historical Bessarabia (Cetatea Alba, Ismail and Hotin), were annexed to the Ukrainian SSR in exchange for parts of the Moldovan ASSR.⁷¹ Beside the idea of destroying Bessarabia’s compact historical integrity, Soviet official strategies pursued access to the Danube (through a reliable Slavic republic) and made the Moldovan SSR a landlocked entity. Undeniably, Ukrainian Communist officials brought pressure to bear on the formulation of this policy, both in the terms of the Soviet ultimatum concerning Bessarabia (the ultimatum of 26th June, 1940, claimed Bessarabia from Romania on the basis of the Ukrainian majority in the province⁷²) and of the Piedmont Principle. Khrushchev proposed to the

Central Committee of the CPSU that the new Moldovan Soviet Republic should be created by the unification of the "Moldovan population only," and not the territory of Bessarabia and the Moldovan ASSR.⁷³

The fact remains that with the new borders, the disputed territory between the Dniester and the Prut, Bessarabia ceased to be a single unit precisely because it was expected that this would complicate any future attempt to have the area returned to Romania.

In the long term, the unification of these two distinct entities (known as Bessarabia and Transnistria, or the "left bank" and "right bank" of the Dniester river), which had never existed before in any sense as a common entity, was fateful for the further evolution of both the Moldovan SSR and the Republic of Moldova. Economically and demographically speaking, Soviet Moldova gradually developed as two republics in one: a largely rural, agricultural and indigenous Moldovan, and a more urban, Slavic, and generally immigrant population in Transnistria working in Soviet-style heavy industry⁷⁴. Most of Moldovan industry worked as an appendage to the great Soviet enterprises, or was located outside Bessarabia in Transnistria, which produced 1/3 of Moldovan industrial output.

At the same time, the element of the party apparatus that promoted Soviet nationalities policy in the Moldovan SSR were mainly Moldovan elements from Transnistria, alongside Russian officials appointed from Moscow. As a whole, these elements enjoyed an almost caste-like dominance over public life in Moldova in the Soviet period, reinforced by the low level of education within the Moldovan population, the dominance of Russian and Russified cadres in most major institutions, and near-universal use of Russian as the language of official business in the republic.⁷⁵

Besides the inherent distortion of the ethnic balance in the Moldovan SSR, that peculiar Soviet policy generated long-term premises for future Transnistrian separation. On 2nd September, 1990, the region, supported by Moscow, proclaimed itself an independent entity, the Pridnestrovian Moldovan Republic (PMR), and ceased to take orders from the central government of the Republic of Moldova.

IV.2. Transnistrian problem and interests of the Russian Federation

The Transnistrian crisis was artificially created by Moscow in 1990, in the context of the Soviet systemic crisis and the ascendancy of national movements in the Soviet republics. Facing the probability of the Moldovan

SSR leaving the Soviet Union, Lukyanov, President of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union, supported by Yazov and Pugo, respectively Soviet Ministers of Defense and Internal Affairs, decided to create two states on the territory of Moldova: on the left bank of the Dniester and in the region of Gagauzia.⁷⁶

No wonder that the Transnistria region had sympathizers in official Moscow from the very start of its conflict with Chişinău. Until the summer of 1990, that sympathy was expressed primarily as a modest pro-Transnistrian bias in Gorbachev's efforts at conflict management in Moldova. But by fall of that year, the interests of the Soviet government, and later of its Russian successor, had shifted toward support for Tiraspol as a way of defending Moscow's own political influence and military bases in the region. As early as the fall of 1990, therefore, every major escalatory action the Transnistrians took was preceded by a clear show of support from Moscow. In many cases, aid from Moscow made Transnistrian strides toward independence possible.⁷⁷ At the same time, Soviet officials created a linkage between the problem of local separatism in Moldova and the Moldovan SSR's commitment to signing the new Soviet treaty, initiated by Gorbachev in order to save the Soviet Union.⁷⁸

Moscow's first effective support for the Transnistrians came in September 1990, when Soviet Interior Ministry troops were dispatched to Tiraspol to protect the "Congress" of Russophone elites that declared the "Transnistrian Republic" independent of Moldova within the Soviet Union.⁷⁹ The troops' intervention was largely aimed at conflict management - in this case, deterring Chisinau from suppressing the gathering by force, as it had threatened to do. It also had a second goal, however: to pressure Moldova to abandon its bid for independence or else face dismemberment.

Now useful to the Kremlin as a tool, the Transnistrians soon began receiving more substantial help. As early as 1990, the Soviet civil defense organization and DOSAAF, the official Soviet paramilitary organization, started supplying the Transnistrian volunteers with weapons. Meanwhile, the Transnistrians had also secured the sympathy of the 14th Army by resisting Chişinău's anti-military legislation. The 14th Army troops, many of them natives of the Transnistria region, were further encouraged by the Defense Ministry's open tilt toward Tiraspol. Thus by the time the first Moldovan-Transnistrian armed confrontation took place outside Dubossary in November 1990, the Transnistrian Russophones had not

only their own armed volunteer formations, but also the expectation of support from Soviet troops.⁸⁰

Unfortunately for all concerned, Gorbachev misplayed his hand at this point. After the Dubossary incident, both Snegur and the Moldovan parliament signaled a willingness to accept Gorbachev's terms: they would consider a Union Treaty if Gorbachev would help end the Transnistrian separatist bid. But unwilling to abandon the Transnistrians, Gorbachev refused. Snegur, in disgust, called for the December 1990 "National Assembly" at which between 500,000 and 800,000 Moldovans demanded independence from the Soviet Union and rejection of any union treaty. Thereafter, the Moldovan government was committed to that course.

After the December debacle, the Soviet government increased its aid to the Transnistrian republic. The Soviet Agro-Industrial Bank helped the Transnistrians to set up their own national bank, enabling Tiraspol to break the Moldovan budget by withholding payments due to Chișinău. Soviet KGB and interior ministry units were ordered to work with their (technically illegal) Transnistrian counterparts, and Moscow turned a blind eye as the extra-legal Cossack movement dispatched paramilitary volunteers to Tiraspol.

Conflict broke out between the new Moldovan authorities in Chișinău and the "Transnistrian Moldovan Republic" (with the Russian acronym "PMR") on the left bank of the Dniester in late spring and summer 1992, and resulted in several hundred casualties. The conflict was soon eclipsed by other world events and disappeared from the headlines. It remains, however, one of the most complicated conflicts on the post-Soviet scene, in terms of its pre-history, its political constellations and possible future developments. While an effective ceasefire was concluded on 7th July, 1992, no solution has yet been found to the underlying contentious issue, the legal-territorial status of the left bank of the Dniester in the Moldovan state.

Although the Russian mass media and officials have regularly referred to the war as an ethnic conflict,⁸¹ it would be a gross oversimplification to present the conflict as a showdown between the ethnic Moldovan and the 'Russian-speaking' part of the Moldovan population. Indeed, the Transnistrian region's ethnic mix before the war was over 40% Moldovan, 28% Ukrainian, and only 25.5% Russian⁸². Moreover neither side involved in conflict agrees with this description, and both insist that it is essentially political in character.

At the same time, the ethnic dimension cannot be denied altogether: in the Transnistrian region, and only there, the dominant sector of the population included Russified Moldovans and Ukrainians as well as Russians. Conversely, until after the war the post-Communist Moldovan government in Chişinău was composed almost exclusively of ethnic Moldovans.

On the Moldovan side, the conflict began as a mass insurgency, but it became a case of popular chauvinism after Moldovan nationalists came to power in Moldova and pushed ahead the policy of hard Romanization and unification with Romania. Under the influence of nationalists among the Popular Front leaders, the legislature introduced a series of extremely divisive measures, which heightened the growing anxiety of the Russian-speaking minorities. The process of anti-Soviet mobilization that preceded the dissolution of the USSR thus reinforced the ethnic cleavage already present in Moldova.⁸³

On the side of the Russian speaking secessionists in the Transnistrian region, in contrast, the violence was a case of elite conspiracy, with support from Moscow playing a crucial role. Incumbent Russophone leaders in the Transnistria region used ethnic outbidding to exacerbate mass hostility and the security dilemma, in order to preserve and increase their own power. The war in Moldova happened as it did because Moscow deterred mass-led violence on the Moldovan side, but later determined that its strategic interests were best served by supporting instead of preventing the Transnistrian elites' secessionism. Moscow therefore helped the Transnistrian elites to start the war, and then to win it.⁸⁴

The outbreak of major military confrontations in the Transnistrian area put Boris Yeltsin in an unenviable position. It was extremely difficult to find the balance between support for the Moldovan alliance partner in the Commonwealth of Independent States and the need to stop the wave of allegations that he was betraying the interests of fellow Russians in the PMR. In addition to this, the position of Russia was complicated by a number of other concerns: a) the territorial integrity not only of Moldova, but also of Russia was at stake. If Russia should decide to recognize the "PMR" and the Gagauz republic, Moldova and Romania would most certainly retaliate by recognizing the breakaway Russian territories, Tatarstan and Chechnya. Other states could then be expected to follow suit; b) Yeltsin had not forgotten that Mircea Snegur was one of the few Soviet republican leaders who explicitly supported him in the struggle against the putschists in August 1991 - while the "PMR" leaders did not; c) If strong anti-Russian

sentiments should prevail in Moldovan politics, this state could possibly, together with Ukraine and the Baltic states, end up as a kind of anti-Russian *cordon sanitaire*. That would greatly complicate the attempts of the Yeltsin regime to integrate Russia into the Western world; d) The Yeltsin regime was very sensitive to allegations of Russian neo-imperialism. Despite the fact that it contributed to dismantling the Soviet Union, it was regularly accused of harboring imperialist schemes, and tried to avoid any action that could substantiate such accusations. The Yeltsin government's divided and indecisive attitude toward the Transnistrian conflict led to ambiguities in the official Russian policy regarding this issue.

In the end, the efforts of the patriotic opposition to bring about a more active Russian policy in the Transnistrian conflict met with sympathy and support among certain members of the Yeltsin entourage. Significantly, Vice President Aleksandr Rutskoy was a leading champion of the Transnistrian cause in Russian politics. Rutskoy had on a number of occasions directly and indirectly attacked the position of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrei Kozyrev, who was generally considered a soft-liner on this and on most other issues.⁸⁵ In a situation almost unprecedented in democratic states, the vice president of the Russian Federation expressed the attitudes of the parliamentary opposition just as much as the attitudes of his government. The contrast between the two voices of the Russian executive was made abundantly clear in early April 1992 when both Rutskoy and Kozyrev visited Chișinău and Tiraspol within two days. Rutskoy proclaimed that the Transnistrian republic "has existed, exists and will continue to exist," while Kozyrev talked in Chișinău about Moldova's sovereignty and integrity.⁸⁶

In a heated debate at the 6th Congress of People's Deputies of the Russian Federation shortly afterwards, Rutskoy advocated official recognition of the "PMR." The cautious faction in the parliament prevailed, however. At the very same time, on 6th April 1992, diplomatic relations were established between Russia and Moldova. The escalation of the conflict after the Snegur ultimatum in March 1992 threatened to compromise the neutrality of the 14th Army in Moldova, which Russia took under its control by a presidential decree of 1st April, 1992.⁸⁷

General Lebed, who replaced Yurii Netkachev as commander of the 14th Army in June 1992, on a number of occasions voiced strong support for the "PMR" regime. He declared the right bank city of Bendery an inalienable part of "PMR," and "PMR" itself "a small part of Russia," and the Transnistria region the "key to the Balkans."⁸⁸ When Bendery was

captured by Moldovan forces on 19th June, tanks from the 14th Army crossed the bridge over the Dniester. This event appears to have been the turning point of the battle.⁸⁹

The June 1992 war created a new situation for Russian policy makers: the 14th Army's involvement in the war against the Republic of Moldova indicated a change in Russian policy towards the Transnistrian conflict, but also in that related to the Near Abroad.

The Transnistrian conundrum lay heavily on the process of post-Communist transition in Moldova. As has been pointed out earlier, the conflict has generally portrayed as ethnic in origin. Nevertheless, efforts to deal with the ethnic concerns of the separatists remain ineffective so long as the more fundamental sources of the conflicts are not addressed. In fact, the crisis has been the result less of legitimate ethnic grievances and more of a long-term contest between two different political elites, one of which replaced the other in Moldova's transition from Soviet republic to independent state.⁹⁰ A complicating factor is that the Transnistrian republic established rudimentary state structures, that is, an elected president and parliament, military formations, a vast network of *rayon* and city councils left over from the Soviet period, and even introduced its own currency. As a result, since the Transnistrian leaders have profited from the lack of central Moldovan control over the region, they also unlikely to commit to political reforms which would diminish their position of leverage toward Chisinau.⁹¹

But the most complicating problem of the dispute is the Russian 14th army's and the Russian Federation's favorable stance toward Transnistria. According to a statement made some years ago by Moldovan Minister of National Security Tudor Botnaru, the key to the Transnistrian conflict is neither in Chisinau nor in Tiraspol, but in Moscow.⁹² In October 1994, a Russian-Moldovan agreement was signed stipulating the withdrawal of Russian troops from the region, but the accord has never taken effect owing to the Russian State Duma's refusal to ratify it. In addition, on 13th November 1996, the State Duma adopted a resolution declaring the region a zone of "special strategic interest for Russia."⁹³ Under international pressure, at the 1999 Istanbul OSCE summit Russia committed to withdraw its army forces from Moldova by 2001, but has evaded this responsibility, invoking the technical difficulties of withdrawal.

During this period the Transnistrian conflict has also been invoked many times in the electoral prospectus and policies of the most important political party in Moldova. As such, we must recognise that beside many others explanations for Moldova's pro-Russian orientation,

Moldovan political elites hoped that Russia would support reunification of the country, with modest guarantees of autonomy to the Transnistria secessionist republic. The Russian Federation maintains its interest in the Republic of Moldova, invoking the historical past and the presence of the large Russian minority, but in fact its attitude is determined by great power geopolitical implications. In the context of post-Soviet politics, relations between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Moldova are marked by many contradictions. Russia officially supports the territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova, and officially is involved in "settlement" of the Transnistrian conflict. At the same time, Moscow is the main supporter of the separatist regime in Tiraspol and provides the Pridnestrovian Moldovan Republic with political, economic, financial and military aid.⁹⁴

The interests of the Russian Federation in Transnistria are determined by the following considerations: a) to maintain strategic Russian Federation positions in South-Eastern Europe; b) to defend in Moldova the interests of the Russian population and other nationalities that consider Russia as their historical motherland; c) to maintain strategic links with the economic enterprises of Transnistria, many of them unique within the military-industrial complex; d) to solve the conflict in the interest of Russia's own stability, and consolidate Russia's relationships with the states from the "Near Abroad" with a Russian minority; e) to establish stable and predictable relations with Romania and not to permit its national influence on Moldova to increase.⁹⁵

Russia initiated two plans to settle the issue of Moldovan territorial integrity, both proposing the federalization of the Republic of Moldova, with Chisinau and Tiraspol as equal partners; both plans thus give Russia the instruments to influence and pressure the Republic of Moldova, and the possibility to maintain its military bases in Transnistria. The first was the "Primakov Memorandum,"⁹⁶ signed in 1997, and the second was the so-called "Kozak Memorandum" which was supposed to be signed in 2003, but was rejected by the Communist government as result of massive protest and external pressure.⁹⁷ In both cases, but especially in the latter, Russia pushed for a treaty giving Transnistria near independence within a federal state, enough seats in the Moldovan Parliament to block constitutional change, and the long-term presence of Russian troops.

In this sense, the Russian Federation uses the issue of territorial integrity to influence policy-making in the Republic of Moldova, but at the same time the Transnistrian issue is a piece of the puzzle Russia's great power game in relations with the European Union and USA.

Conclusions

Russian territorial consciousness extends beyond the country's present borders and "Russia" and "Russian identity" are not confined within the space of the present Russian Federation. Historically accustomed to a large territory and the "absence" of borders, Russia continues to look at the post-Soviet sphere as something relative and open to change, suitable for return to the Russian "core." From this point of view, the primordality of territoriality prevails in post-Soviet Russian history and politics.

The case of Georgia suddenly opened the issue of territorial integrity in the post-Soviet states as a tool of Russian foreign policy strategies, especially in the similar case of Transnistrian separatist republic of Moldova and in the probably similar case of the Ukrainian region of Crimea. The invasion of Georgia in 2008, and official Russian Federation recognition of the separatist republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, showed explicitly the linkage between Russian policy in the "Near Abroad" and the commitment to rebuilding the country's great power status.

The Georgian case is the first where Russia has successfully used territorial integrity in a combined strategy of security, neo-imperial ambitions and great power stance, looking for international affirmation as a regional and world power. But in long-term strategy the official recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia by the Russian Federation was a demonstration of the Russian political elite's incapacity to transform the post-Soviet sphere according to modern principles of influence and power. The 26th August act attested to the old Russian imperial paradigm of action in the post-Soviet sphere adapted to new realities – the separation and annexation of new territories. Could similar scenarios be expected in the different cases of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova? The logic of Russian political action suggests that the Russian Federation has no other strategies at the moment than to erode the territorial integrity of the neighboring states in order to achieve its geopolitical goals.

Russian behavior in the "Near Abroad" suggests that the Kremlin is content to allow Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova their internal sovereignty and to grant their territorial integrity, so long as they do not become a threat to Russia and do not pose challenges to its perception of these states as part of the Russian "vital space."

NOTES

- ¹ P. Chaadaev, "Apologhia sumashestvia", in *Socinenia*, Moscow, 1989, p. 139-154.
- ² See for instance Mark R. Beissinger's reflections in "The Persisting Ambiguity of Empire", in *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 1995, 11, 2:165, but also David Kerr, "The New Eurasianism: The Rise of Geopolitics in Russia's Foreign Policy", in *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 6. (Sep., 1995), pp. 977-988; Graham Smith, "The Masks of Proteus: Russia, Geopolitical Shift and the New Eurasianism, in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New Series, Vol. 24, No. 4 (1999), pp. 481-494.
- ³ David Kerr, "The New Eurasianism: The Rise of Geopolitics in Russia's Foreign Policy", pp. 977-988.
- ⁴ See on this point Dov Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping strategies in the CIS*, London, Antony Rowe Ltd, 2000
- ⁵ G. Pelnens (ed.), *The "Humanitarian Dimension" of Russian Foreign Policy toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Baltic States*, Riga, CEEPS, 2009, p. 13.
- ⁶ G. Hosking, *Rusia: popor și imperiu. 1552-1917*, București, Polirom, 2001, p. 25-26.
- ⁷ Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geopolitical Imperatives*, New York, NY, Basic Books, 1997, p. 18.
- ⁸ D. Furman, "Live History. A Silent Cold War", in *Russian in Global Affairs*. 30.06.2006. Nr. 2, p. 68.
- ⁹ J. O'Loughlin and P. F. Talbot, 'Where in the World is Russia? Geopolitical Perceptions and Preferences of Ordinary Russians', in *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 2005, 46, No. 1, p. 29.
- ¹⁰ S. Soloviev, *Ob istorii drevnei Rossii*, Moscow, 1992, p. 13-22, V. Kliucevski, *Istoriceskie portrety. Deiateli istoriceskoi mysli*, Moscow, 1991, pp. 55-61.
- ¹¹ N. Berdeaev, "Russkaia ideia", in *Voprosy Filosofii*, 1990, Nr. 1, p. 81.
- ¹² I. Poleakov, "Rossiskie prostory: blago ili prokleatie? Zametki istorika", in *Svobodnaya mysli*, 1994, Nr. 12, pp. 18-22.
- ¹³ A. Arbatov, "Natzional'naya idea i natzional'naya bezopasnosti", in *Vneshneaja politika i bezopasnosti sovremennoi Rossii, 1991-2002*, Vol. I, Moscow, Rosspen, 2002, p. 235
- ¹⁴ D. Knight, "Identity and Territory: Geographical Perspectives on Nationalism and Regionalism," in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 72, 4:514-31, 1982, p. 526.
- ¹⁵ J. O'Loughlin and P. F. Talbot, "Where in the World is Russia? Geopolitical Perceptions and Preferences of Ordinary Russians", p. 24.
- ¹⁶ The *Pro-Western group* (headed by the Foreign Minister in 1991, A Kozyrev) was powerful at the beginning and pleaded for close relations with the West; *Moderate liberals* (pragmatists) were seeking to develop a distinctively

- Russian foreign policy based upon a realistic assessment of the country's interests; *Moderate conservatives*, representatives of important institutional forces within the military high command, industrial managers and the main segments of the federal bureaucracy, did not see the end of the Soviet Union as leading inexorably to the end of major power status. Russia, in their view, should develop its sphere of influence, particularly in the 'Near Abroad', and avoid excessive dependence on the West; *the Radical left and right* advocate rebuilding the superpower status of the country, by military means if necessary, but to date these groups are largely isolated from the policy process.
- 17 "Imperial nationalists" is a group whose ideological projects fixate on the rebirth of empire, based on Russian nationalism and usually having an anti-Western stance (A. Dughin, A. Prokhanov, M. Iuriev, V. Zhirinovskiy, V. Alksnis etc.); in 2003-2004 "Liberal discourse" started discussions on "Russia as liberal empire" (A. Chubais, L. Gozman), focused on influence on the international arena and capacity to subject other states to Russian influence with respect to their legal status. O. Malinova, "Tema imperii v sovremennyh Rossiiskih politiceskikh diskursah", in A. Miller (ed.), *Nasledie imperii i budushee Rossii*, Moscow, NLO, 2008, p. 59-102.
- 18 *Ibidem*, p. 73.
- 19 V. Zhirinovskiy, *Rossia pobedit*, Moscow, LDPR, 2006, p. 170-171, 201.
- 20 O. Malinova, "Tema imperii v sovremennyh Rossiiskih politiceskikh diskursah", p. 81.
- 21 D. Sidorov, "Post-Imperial Third Romes: Resurrections of a Russian Orthodox Geopolitical Metaphor", in *Geopolitics*, 2006, Nr. 11, pp. 317-347.
- 22 M. Nazarov, *Vozhdiu Tret'ego Rima: k Poznaniyu Russkoy Idei v Apokalipsicheskoe Vremia*, Moscow, Russkaia Ideia 2005, p. 393.
- 23 O'Loughlin and P. F. Talbot, 'Where in the World is Russia? Geopolitical Perceptions and Preferences of Ordinary Russians', p. 28.
- 24 *Ibidem*, p. 31-32.
- 25 Mark R. Beissinger, "The Persisting Ambiguity of Empire", in *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 1995, 11, 2, p. 169.
- 26 *Istoria Rossii. Noveishee vremia*, 1945-1999, Moscow, AST, 2000, 398.
- 27 Gr. Freeze, *Russia. A History*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 438.
- 28 M. Beissinger, "The Persisting Ambiguity of Empire", p.165.
- 29 *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, January 12, 1994.
- 30 M. Beissinger, "The Persisting Ambiguity of Empire", p. 166.
- 31 D. Boffa, *Ot SSSR k Rossii* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnoshenia, 1996), 278.
- 32 Dov Lynch, *Russian Peacekeeping strategies in the CIS*, London, Antony Rowe Ltd, 2000, p. 52.
- 33 *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, January 26, 1994.

- 34 M. Beissinger, "The Persisting Ambiguity of Empire", p. 168.
- 35 O. Malinova, "Tema imperii v sovremennyh Rossiiskih politiceskikh diskursah", p. 96.
- 36 O'Loughlin and P. F. Talbot, "Where in the World is Russia? Geopolitical Perceptions and Preferences of Ordinary Russians", p. 23.
- 37 O. Malinova, "Tema imperii v sovremennyh Rossiiskih politiceskikh diskursah", p. 97.
- 38 A. Arbatov, "Natzional'naya idea i natzional'naya bezopasnosti", p. 246-247
- 39 G. Pelnens (ed.), *The "Humanitarian Dimension" of Russian Foreign Policy toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Baltic States*, p. 96.
- 40 G. Nodia (ed.), *Political landscape of Georgia*, Delft, Eburon Academic Publishers, 2006, p. 10.
- 41 G. Pelnens (ed.), *The "Humanitarian Dimension" of Russian Foreign Policy toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Baltic States*, p. 96.
- 42 *Ibidem*, p. 97.
- 43 V. Putin, "Vystuplenie i diskussia na Miunhenskoj konferentzii po voprosam politiki bezopasnosti", Munich, 10 February 2007, available at www.kremlin.ru
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- 45 *Ibidem*, p. 79.
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- 47 See on this point Szporluk's reflections in *Russia, Ukraine and the breakup of the Soviet Union*, Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 2000, p. 319-342.
- 48 M. von Hagen, 'Does Ukraine Have a History?', in *Slavic Review*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (Autumn, 1995), p. 670.
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- 50 For details of these debates see J. Pelenski, "The contest of the "Kievan Inheritance" in the Russian-Ukrainian relations", in P. Potichnyi (ed.), *Ukraine and Russia in their historical encounter*, Edmonton, CIUSP Press, 1992.
- 51 S. Ekel'chik, *Istoria Ukrainy. Stanovlenie sovremennoi natsii*, Kiev, KIS, 2010, p. 48.
- 52 R. Szporluk considers that only a small part of Ukrainian territory fell under Russian influence: after 1667 the land to the west of the Dnieper remained within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth until 1793/1795; the Polish nobility was the dominant group in the area until 1830, if not 1863, and Poles retained great social and cultural influence until after the Russian

- revolutions of 1917; southern Ukraine, including the Crimea, conquered by the Russian Empire from the Ottoman Turks in the late eighteenth century, showed the continuing influence of centuries of Islamic rule; the region of Transcarpathia was uninterruptedly part of Hungary from the Middle Ages until 1919, when it was annexed to the new Czechoslovakia (it became Hungarian again from 1939 to 1944, and only after that date was ruled from Moscow, for the first time ever); the Chernivtsi region, the northern part of the former Austrian province of Bukovina, was Romanian from 1918 to 1940 and became Soviet only in 1940, being formally incorporated into the Soviet Union after 1944; the present regions of L'viv, Ternopil, and Ivano-Frankivsk, part of Poland from the mid-fourteenth century, were annexed by Austria in 1772, and remained as eastern "Galicia" ruled by Vienna until 1918, "Ukraine: From an Imperial Periphery to a Sovereign State", p. 88.
- 53 See on this point A. Kappeler, "Mazepintsy, Malorossy, Khokhly: Ukrainians in the Ethnic Hierarchy of the Russian Empire", in A. Kappeler (ed.) *Culture, Nation, and Identity: The Ukrainian-Russian Encounter (1600-1945)*, Edmonton, CIUS Press, 2003, pp. 162-181.
- 54 M. von Hagen, "Does Ukraine Have a History?", p. 671.
- 55 *Izvestia*, 4th May, 1994.
- 56 The "Hungarian issue" and "Rusyn problem" in Transcarpathia; "Galician separatism"; in southern and eastern parts of Ukraine (Odessa, Donbas and Crimea), for details see G. Kasianov, *Ukraina 1991-2007. Ocherki Noveishei istorii*, Kiev: Nash Chas, 2008, pp. 96-102.
- 57 *Ibidem*, p. 101-102.
- 58 S. Yekel'chik, *Istoria Ukrainy*, p. 287.
- 59 Kasianov, 103.
- 60 The Crimean Autonomic Soviet Socialist Republic existed from 1921 to 1944 as part of the RSFSR.
- 61 G. Kasianov, *Ukraina 1991-2007*, p. 104
- 62 S. Yekel'chik, *Istoria Ukrainy*, p. 294, 387.
- 63 G.Sasse, "Conflict prevention in a transition state: the Crimean issue in post-Soviet Ukraine", in *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Summer 2002, Vol. 8, Nr. 2, p.15.
- 64 The Paris conference of 1856 decided to return southern Bessarabia to the Principality of Moldova, but the Russian Empire returned it only at the Berlin Congress of 1878.
- 65 53 peoples of the Soviet Union had an administrative unit named after them: 15 Soviet Socialist Republics, 20 Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics, 8 Autonomous Oblasts, 10 Autonomous Okrugs; Walker Connor, "Soviet Policies toward the non-Russian Peoples in Theoretic and Historic Perspective", in Alexander J. Motyl (ed.) *The Post-Soviet Nations: Perspectives on the Demise of the USSR* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1992), pp. 33-35.

- ⁶⁶ T. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, New York, Cornell University Press, 2001, pp.9, 274.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 274.
- ⁶⁸ *Vsesoiuznaia Perepesi Naselenia* (1926), Tom 4, Moscow, Gosstatizdat, 1928, p. 24
- ⁶⁹ O. Țîcu, "How to Make a 'Nation': Reflections on the Moldovan Nation-Building Policies during the Soviet Union (1944-1989)", *Transylvanian Review*, vol. XVII, 4, winter 2008, p. 136.
- ⁷⁰ A.V. Repida, *Formarea RSS Moldovenești*, Chișinău, Cartea Moldovenească, 1977, pp. 246-247.
- ⁷¹ *Sed'maja Sessija Verhovnogo Soveta SSSR. 1-7 avgusta 1940*. Stenograficeskii otčet, Moscow, Gosstatizdat 1940, pp. 183.
- ⁷² *Pactul Molotov Ribbentrop și consecințele sale pentru Basarabia*, Chișinău, Universitas, 1992, pp. 17-18
- ⁷³ *Aspects des Relations Russo-Roumains. Retrospectives et Orientations*, Paris, Minard, 1967, p. 163; A.M. Lazarev, *Moldavskaia Sovetskaia Gosudarstvennost' i Bessarabskii Vopros*, Chișinău, Cartea Moldovenească, p. 524.
- ⁷⁴ C. King, *The Moldovans*, Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 2000.
- ⁷⁵ Mark R. Beissinger, "State Building in the Shadow of an Empire-State: The Soviet Legacy in Post-Soviet politics", in K. Dawisha and B. Parrott, *The End of Empire? The transformation of the USSR in Comparative Perspective* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), p. 165.
- ⁷⁶ Gh. E. Cojocaru, *Separatismul în slujba Imperiului*, Chișinău, Civitas, 2000, p. 5; M. Grecu and A. Țăranu, *Trupele ruse în Republica Moldova. Documente și materiale*, Chișinău, Litera, 2004, p. 12. Transnistrian leader Igor Smirnov mentions this fact in his book *Zhiti na nashei zemle*, Moscow, 2001, p. 70-71; these arguments were used in the Ilașcu case against Moldova and Russia, judged at the European Court of Human Rights.
- ⁷⁷ Mihai Grecu and Anatol Țăranu, *Trupele ruse în Republica Moldova. Documente și materiale*, p. 12.
- ⁷⁸ "You sign the new Soviet treaty and we solve the question of two separatist entities in your republic" was the declaration from Moscow; *Moldova Socialistă*, 22nd December, 1990.
- ⁷⁹ Gheorghe E. Cojocaru, *Separatismul în slujba Imperiului*, p. 54.
- ⁸⁰ "Declarația Guvernului RSSM", in *Moldova Suverană*, nr. 261 (November 4), 265 (November 13), 1990.
- ⁸¹ Russian newspaper headlines at the time on "ethnic cleansing", "apartheid", and "genocide" announce a new kind of martyrology; while in many cases reflecting reality, in other cases this provided Russians with a certain psychological relief from feelings of historical shame or guilt; Mark R. Beissinger, "The Persisting Ambiguity of Empire", p. 166.

- 82 *Evropeizatsia i razreshenie konfliktov: konkretnye issledovania evropeiskoi*
83 *periferii*, Moscow, Vesi Mir, 2005, 159.
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- 84 Stuart J. Kaufman, "Spiraling to Ethnic War: Elites, Masses, and Moscow
in Moldova's Civil War", *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 2. (Autumn,
1996), p. 110.
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BETWEEN WESTERNIZATION AND ASSERTION OF THE NATIONAL: YOUTH PERCEPTIONS IN THE NEW EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AND THE MARGINS OF EUROPE

The world is “growing both more global and more divided, more thoroughly interconnected and more intricately partitioned at the same time”

(Clifford Geertz).

Introduction

In the following paper I attempt to contribute to highlighting the issue of the controversial processes of integration and division, of growing sameness and lasting difference, of the search for both authenticity and translation, of blurring and consolidating borders, and of local globalization and global localization. I try to depict how this duality influences the construction and enactment of identities at a time when it is believed that “the politics of identity substitutes for the politics of nation-[state]” (Guillen, 2001, p. 14). And finally, based on the youth discourses from the so called new European societies and the margins of Europe, I argue that this state of duality provokes a new politics of ambivalence, responsible for upholding ambivalent identities driven by the attempt to become Western and to get the best of the local simultaneously.

It is a widespread assumption that today the boundaries are becoming fuzzy and that never was the shifting of places as easy as nowadays. Usually scholars bring the example of the European Union (EU) as a case in consideration. Despite this fact (or probably because of this fact), I guess the discourse on “Fortress Europe” has gained a new incite today. How is it possible that in the conditions of the ongoing EU enlargement the frontiers of Europe are constantly consolidated? How is it possible that the countries that have managed to return to their “Mother” Europe

after the collapse of the communist regime need to constantly prove their Europeaness, while those remaining on the margins of Europe desperately try to persuade the European “Core” that despite their peripheral position, they belong to Europe because of their historical, religious, cultural heritage, etc. The cases of Romania and Poland, on the one hand, and Georgia, on the other, represent wonderful examples of attempting to prove one’s Europeaness both when it should not be questionable any more (as Poland and Romania are the EU member countries) and when it is still questionable (as Georgia is not a part of the EU).

Thus, I got particularly interested in the youth discourses about the integration with the West (the European “Core”) and their attitudes to the westernizing trends (Westernization mainly narrowed down to Europeanization), and was especially keen on the comparative analysis of their attitudes in the light of the EU membership/non-membership. Taking into consideration the communist legacy characteristic to Romania, Poland and Georgia, has this factor played (or does it still play) any role in the perception of Westernization/Europeanization in these countries? Another common feature is that both Romania and Georgia are considered to be quite conventional Orthodox Christian countries, while it is a common assumption that Eastern Christianity is not very open to the changes coming from the West. So, does Orthodox religion play any role in shaping the attitudes toward Westernization/Europeanization in these countries and if so, what role? Does the religious factor make any difference in Poland as a Catholic country? And finally, how do the official political discourses, which are quite pro-Western in all the abovementioned countries, influence the youth perceptions of Westernization/Europeanization?

Besides the impacts of the communist legacy, the current political discourses, and the religious factor on the youth perceptions of the Westernizing forces, I was curious to find out their responses and concrete strategies to the latter. Whether they apply the strategy of “absorption” (Blum, 2007, p. 12) that is eagerly grasping all the cultural trends and elements coming from the West in order to become “truly” trendy or modernized, or whether they develop a more critical approach of “selective incorporation” (Robertson, 1995, p. 342) being concerned about keeping the best of the local; whether for them the change is a means of total renewal and transformation, or they perceive the change as a means of reinvention of tradition (Hobsbawm, 1983) and “confirmation of continuity” (Mazo, 1996, p. 254); and if the latter is the case, what kind of “cut’n’mix” (Pieterse, 2003, p. 315) that is cultural bricolage they

are involved in and whether it can represent their strategy of asserting the national.

In order to uncover these complex questions, I have conducted a qualitative social research, namely, observations and in-depth interviews, as well as focus groups, with the youth aged 17-25 in Georgia, Romania and Poland. I have conducted 50 in-depth interviews and 2 focus groups with the young people in the capital of Georgia - Tbilisi and 33 in-depth interviews and 5 focus groups with the young people in the capital of Romania - Bucharest and one of the main cities of Transylvania - Cluj-Napoca. The latter was selected because of a popular saying, which I had often heard from my respondents in Bucharest, that the border between Eastern and Western Europe lies through Transylvania (mainly because of its historical exposure to the Austro-Hungarian influences). Therefore, being particularly curious about the perceptions of Westernization among the youth, I decided to interview the young people in Transylvania and to find out whether the more Western location or character of this region within the country has an impact on the youngsters' views. However, it should be emphasized that the data analysis has not revealed any significant differences in their perceptions. In addition, in order to support my arguments with further evidence, I have conducted 14 in-depth interviews and 3 focus groups in Krakow as the old capital and one of the most international cities in Poland, which is also often perceived as its cultural center. The collected data were transcribed and submitted to the qualitative content- and discourse analyses.¹

Theoretical Part

On Spatiotemporal "Transitionality"

Let's start from identifying the "place" of Romania, Poland and Georgia in a "discourse-geography" (Bjelic, 2002, p. 4). It seems extremely important considering the ambivalence related to these countries' geographic and cultural locations, as well as the debates around this issue.

Many scholars emphasize the ambivalence caused by Romanians' dual representations as sharing both Latin and Slavic characteristics, being both Balkan and not Balkan, located in both Eastern and Central Europe, and finally, being "half Western, half Eastern" (Cioroianu, 2002; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2006; Celac, 2006; Severin, 2006; Meleghe, 2006; Boari,

Gherghina, 2009). The fact that the authors describe Romanians as the only Latin nation in the region, connected to the Slavic world through their history and religion, does not cause much discussion; however, the fact of being or not being Balkan provokes much more debate as, according to Encyclopedia Britannica (1998), Romania is a Balkan country, while according to the French version (1993), Romania is not in the list of the Balkan countries (Cioroianu, 2002, p. 210). But even more complicated is the debate on whether Romania is the Eastern or Central European country, especially when it takes place within the same publication; say, in the Federal Trust's publication on "The EU and Romania – Accession and Beyond" (2006) one can find the claims that Romania both is and is not Central European country. For instance, Mungiu-Pippidi states that Romanians "tried to imitate" Central European anti-communist movements though their "parties have never attained the professionalism of Central European ones" (pp. 20-21), while Celac informs us that "Romania was among the last Central European countries to sign on 4 July 2003...a Treaty on Friendly Relations and Cooperation with the Russian Federation" (pp. 148-149). Whatever the debates are, the scholars unanimously agree that Romania can be viewed as the "bridge" between the East and the West.

The same ambivalence is related to Poland's place in a discourse-geography-geopolitics. In the parliamentary speeches of 1990s-2000s Poland is represented as a country, whose both geography and geopolitics had been changed or underwent the changes (especially in the 20th century), lost between the East and the West on the map of Europe. One of the officials declared that despite de Gaulle's famous words that 'one's geography cannot be changed and one can only change one's geopolitics', both "Hitler and Stalin changed our geography... [and] we have been changing our geopolitics on our own in the recent years" (Krzyzanowski, 2009, p. 104). And quite in the spirit of Romanians, Polish politicians state that "Poland has a unique role as a 'bridge' between Europe's East and West" (*ibid.*, p. 104).

Georgians, most probably, have a very little awareness of the abovementioned Polish and Romanian discourses but the perception of Georgia as the "bridge" between the East and the West, between Asia and Europe, has been dominating their discourses for a long time (Tsuladze, 2011, p. 72). The fact that Georgia appears on certain maps of Europe and is excluded from others, is mentioned in various sources as either South-Eastern Europe or Eurasia, or just South Caucasus that is seldom identified as belonging to either Europe or Asia, provokes lots of ambivalence among

Georgians, especially the youngsters, who regularly hear the official political discourse that Georgia's main political priority is the Euro-Atlantic integration, who see the EU flags hanging on all the official buildings all around the country, and who are often reminded the famous words of the former Prime Minister Zurab Jvania: "I am a Georgian, therefore I am a European!" Georgians, very much like Romanians and Poles, are trapped in the state of both geographic and cultural "in-betweenness".

One more factor that seems to be responsible for such a liminality is the perception of these countries as being in the constant condition of transition – from the soviet to the post-soviet, from the communist to the post-communist, from the nationalistic to the post-nationalistic, and from the traditional to the post-traditional (implying normative perceptions from various aspects of social life). Presumably, this spatial and temporal "transitionality" accounts for "'not-yet' or 'never-quite' Europeanness" (Goldsworthy, 2002, p. 29) of these societies pushing the creation of "unstable identities" (Bjelic, 2002, p. 15).

The Stigmatizing and Enlightening Discourses and the Possible Strategies against Them

Before discussing the aspects of such "unstable" or ambivalent identities, let's get familiar with the "Western Imaginary" (Melegh, 2006, p. 31) and the way "the West looks East" (Goldsworthy, 2002, p. 35) as the latter encourages particular discourses and respective responses to/strategies against them in the new European countries and the margins of Europe.

Citing just one of the famous examples that is the already classical work by Maria Todorova, most of the scholars researching recent developments in the Eastern and Central European countries agree that the West invents the "Eastern other" as its "opposite" and through this discourse the West essentializes the Eastern identity (Todorova, 1997). Different narratives can be applied to back this "essentialization" up and the Western "inventors" are especially concerned by being tactful in this regard, therefore, these days the most widespread narratives would probably be the one on "the idea of an ongoing transition... to an ideal social form [though] postponed into the indefinite or localized out of the reach of the 'locals'" (Melegh, 2006, p. 20), or the "philanthropic idea" of supporting the upward movement in the name of civilization (Elias, 1994). One could think of other types of narratives or even sub-narratives

though it's not the purpose of this paper to discuss them but to show their impact on the construction of the locals' perceptions of the Westernizing and Europeanizing forces. Therefore, I will try to unite these narratives in some wider categories roughly dividing them in the following two groups: The stigmatizing discourses and the enlightening discourses (though both imply a certain type of stigmatization).

Under the stigmatizing discourses I imply those that voluntarily or involuntarily result in a negative labeling of the representatives of the Eastern and Central European countries, or those located even farther on the periphery. One of the examples of the stigmatizing discourses is the abovementioned "othering" discourse, which views the societies in the light of a descending civilizational scale and emphasizes the difference between the so called "new" or "emerging" European countries (those on the margins, like Georgia, are not even worth consideration) and "real", "old" Europe. Another example of the stigmatizing discourse is the "asymmetrical" discourse, including the one of Europeanization, which is "asymmetrical enough to silence all those somehow denied membership of that 'universally valid' community... This asymmetry alone and the emerging binary oppositions are powerful enough to deny a 'real existence' to those who are in a midway or bottom position on such a scale" (Melegh, 2006, p. 30).

What are the strategic responses of the victims of the stigmatizing discourses that is how do they try to "respond to these vicious games of inclusion and exclusion"? (Bideleux, 2002, p. 35). Concerning the "othering" discourse, Todorova presented a comprehensive analysis of projecting the stigma and the accompanying frustrations on those located farther to the East and, as a result, Orientalizing them, while simultaneously Occidentalizing oneself as the West of the "other" (Todorova, 1997). A wonderful example of such a response is presented in the abovementioned publication by the Federal Trust entitled "The EU and Romania – Accession and Beyond" (2006). In the chapter on "Romania and the Future of the European Union" the author talks how important Romania as a political agent is to the EU because of its "cultural and geopolitical belonging" to Central Europe, and because of its neighbourhood with both Eastern Europe consisting of Ukraine, Moldova and Russia, and "South-Eastern Europe (the Balkans), where Romania has a tradition of intense contacts unburdened by hatred and conflict" (Severin, p. 109). In addition, Romania is presented as a real supporter of "Turkey's accession to the EU, as well as that of Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus and of the Western Balkan countries"

(*ibid.*, p. 107). Thus, here is an attempt to push the borders of Eastern Europe farther to the East and to exclude oneself from both Eastern Europe and the Balkan region;² we can also see an attempt to present oneself as a peaceful country, “unburdened by [ethnic] hatred and conflict” and ultimately, more civilized than the Balkans; finally, not yet being a member of the EU herself (as the book is published in 2006), Romania is nevertheless considered such an “important political agent” within the EU that it already promotes other less important agents’ (located farther East and South-East) incorporation in it.

The “asymmetrical” discourse provokes its own strategic response as well. As the main danger connected to it is “to silence all those somehow denied membership of that ‘universally valid’ community” (which is represented by Europe), the ones “in a midway or bottom position” desperately strive to gain the European status and to prove that they are the genuine European societies. “On a ‘sliding scale of merit’ no one should want to be out of ‘Europe’ and social and value patterns it represents or, more precisely, is aligned with” (Melegh, 2006, p. 30). Therefore, Romanians need to constantly reiterate: “We are Europeans” or “We are a part of Europe” (Boari, Gherghina, 2009, p. 13); Poles emphasize their “national uniqueness [that] reinforces Poland’s attractiveness vis-à-vis the European Union” even in their parliamentary speeches (Krzyzanowski, 2009, p. 104); while Georgians, whose European status is rather questionable, need to persuade both themselves and the outsiders: “I am a Georgian, therefore I am a European!”

However, in order to sound more trustworthy, they have to persuade the powerful European players that the latter are in need of the Eastern, Central, South-Eastern or more peripheral regions on the margins of Europe. One of the vivid examples can be found in the same paper by Severin having the following conclusion: “Romania needs the EU as much as the EU needs Romania” (p. 111), and alongside the trivial idea that “what is good for Europe is also good for Romania”, presenting the new truth that “what is good for Romania is good for Europe” (p. 112). A similar case from the Polish reality can be found in the Polish politicians’ discourses on “Polish national mission in the EU” before joining it. This mission is perceived as essential for the EU itself and the politicians argue about Poland’s “preferential treatment” by the EU implying that “due to its exceptional mission and national uniqueness, Poland must be treated by the EU in some special, less demanding way... differently than, say, other EU candidate countries” (Krzyzanowski, 2009, p. 110). A corresponding

example can be brought from the Georgian reality represented by the discourse on Georgia's strategic importance for Europe as a potential energy supplier with the pipelines stretching across the country, providing Europe with the gas from the East and competing with the Russian monopoly over gas. Europe is often pitied for having to play by Russian rules in order to survive cold winters, and the alternative energy projects, in which Georgia is considered to be a "corridor" for supplying Europe, are ascribed a missionary value.

Besides the stigmatizing discourses, or rather alongside them, there are quite powerful enlightening discourses, which I would call the euphemistic forms of stigmatization. The enlightening discourses aim to "enlighten" the new European or not-quite European societies and to transform them into "real" democracies of "true" Europe. One of the examples of the enlightening discourse is the "civilizational discourse," which implies that Europe (or more precisely, the EU) has a cultural mission of cultivating "true European values" among those to be transformed into "real" democracies. Consequently, the EU accession and the accompanying Europeanization process is considered as "the most authentic form of modernization" (Melegh, 2006, p. 118). It turns out that usually the main supporters of this discourse are the local intellectual and elite groups, who may "continuously argue that 'Europe' brings 'tolerance' and 'rationality' into our not truly 'European' country" (*ibid.*, p. 114) and may constantly complain about their country's inability to properly encompass and enact European values and modes of life, starting from the distorted forms of individualization, ending with the poor quality of toilets on Hungarian trains. Thus, the "civilizational discourse" is translated into the "elitist discourse" within the local settings. The scholars researching this topic bring various examples of the local intellectuals' call for abandoning "irrational" or "unworthy" local customs and for "the rejection of 'Eastern' local nationalism" (Melegh, 2006, p. 115) drawing a clear line "between the image of the 'national' as past and 'old' and the 'European' as 'future' and 'new'" (Krzyzanowski, 2009, p. 107). Furthermore, Europeanization is considered by them as the only means of overcoming the "backwardness" of their population. Some authors go even further and state that "from time to time the local intelligentsia openly called for the help of the West – in their wording – 'to colonize' the local population" (Melegh, 2006, p. 115).

Thus, certain perceptions are constructed, spread and backed up through the abovementioned discourse, particularly that the locals have various "unworthy" customs, which should be abandoned in the name

of civilization; that the locals are usually “backward”, therefore, unable to promote desirable developments in their society and are in need of someone from the outside to teach them; and that the locals need to reject their local nationalism, which no doubt is “Eastern” (whatever meaning it has), and should move to the post-nationalistic state in order to catch up with “true” Europeans as Western Europe has already moved to the post-nationalist era (Bideleux, Taylor, 1996).

The possible strategies of defense from the both stigmatizing and enlightening discourses are sensibly summarized in Kiossev’s paper under the subtitle of “the dominant strategies of (dis)identification”. He describes two ways of “symbolic escape” representing two extremes: The first strategy is “a radical emigration... [alongside] cultural amnesia” (2002, p. 182) and the second one is a “passionate nationalism and hyperbolic pride” (*ibid.*, p. 183).

To start from the first strategy, it’s not a secret that lots of people from the Eastern part of Europe migrate to its Western part, especially after their countries’ joining the EU as crossing the borders has become much easier, while Western Europe provides more job opportunities and pays better. Poles talk a lot about their compatriots migrating in vast numbers to England and Germany; Romanians produce the same narratives about their compatriots’ massive migration to Italy and Spain... But they also talk with a sad smile or an ironic tone how the Poles desperately try to adopt the British accent after a few months’ stay in Britain; moreover, how they try to even speak Polish with the British accent! Romanians confess with the same sad smile or the same ironic tone that while staying abroad they try to hide their nationality; moreover, that sometimes they pretend to be Italians! (From the author’s in-depth interviews with the Polish and Romanian youth).

I guess these desperate attempts can be viewed as a defense strategy against the Westerners’ discourses on how after joining the EU several hundred thousand Eastern Europeans are on their way to “invade” Western Europe, which is well evidenced by a caricature from one of the British newspapers depicting a long line of trucks with the signs: Romania, Bulgaria, Latvia, etc. and a large poster on the borderline saying: “Welcome to London, equal crime opportunities for all!” (Mautner, 2008, p. 39). This is one of the numerous examples of the Eastern Europeans’ representation in the Western discourses as the criminals responsible for most of the recent ills occurring in the peaceful and democratic societies of Western Europe. But can imitating the British accent or pretending to be an Italian

help avoid stigmatization? I would say it causes double stigmatization (from both one's compatriots and the citizens of a recipient country) and can largely be responsible for a kind of "failure discourse" characteristic to both Romanians and Poles (and probably other "Easterners" as well), which I will discuss later.

The second type of "symbolic escape" is considered to be a "passionate nationalism and hyperbolic pride". As illustrated above, it is assessed as a purely "Eastern" phenomenon as the scholars have a general agreement on the fact that the Western European countries have long stepped into the post-nationalist era (though no doubt one could find the examples of nationalistic discourses all around Western Europe). And even if there are expressions of nationalism in Western Europe, they are still more acceptable than the similar phenomena in Eastern Europe viewed through the dichotomy of "civic" (or "Western") and "ethnic" (or "Eastern") nationalisms, the former "characterized as liberal, voluntarist, universalist, and inclusive", while the latter "glossed as illiberal, ascriptive, particularist, and exclusive" (Brubaker, 2004, p. 133).

The expressions of "passionate nationalism" and the "hyperbolic pride" intertwined with it can be found in different kinds of "identity concerns". A. P. Iliescu describes them on the example of Romanians and states that such "an identity obsession... frequently prevails in Romania" (2009, p. 96) and is represented by such traits as "focus upon 'glorious' past events", "the tendency to overrate (national or ethnic) particularities [that] leads to encapsulation of 'Romanianism' in a certain distinguishing feature", the emphasis on "being special" and "different from others", "a tendency towards self-celebration", as well as "identity fear... that one's identity could be affected (forgotten, altered, modified, etc.) by what is going on around (on the continent, in the whole world, etc.)" exemplified by Romanians' complaints about the attempts of ethnic Romanians' "Hungarization" in Transylvania or "Russification" in Eastern Moldavia (*ibid.*, pp. 97-99).

One would probably ask: What is "wrong with one's being proud about one's own identity?" The author answers that "the most alarming problem is that, while celebrating being Romanian as a value in itself, one can hardly avoid the implication that others (non-Romanians) lack something" (*ibid.*, p. 99). He even goes further and states that "exactly the same is the case with religious identity... if one perceives 'being an Orthodox Christian' as a merit, than one can be inclined to perceive 'being

a Catholic' or 'being a Protestant' as some sort of guilt" (*ibid.*, p. 100). And he concludes that this is the very case of Romanians.

To console Romanians, I would say that the very similar "identity obsession" can be traced among Georgians. The "focus upon 'glorious' past events" is the most common feast narrative in Georgia; "the tendency to overrate (national or ethnic) particularities" exemplified by the narratives that Georgians have a unique alphabet that creates its own language group, that Georgian polyphony is one of the most ear-pleasing, that Georgians are one of the most hospitable nations, or that Georgian food and wine are one of the best in the world, does present "Georgianness" as a distinguishing characteristic; the emphasis on "being special" and "different from others" is not alien to Georgians as well and there is even a popular saying: "All of us, who are the best, are Georgians" ("რაკარგები ვართ, კარტველები ვართ"). And although this popular expression is perceived in a humorous way, the one on "Georgia as a Mother of God's land" is the dominant religious, as well as mundane, discourse of the country. The abovementioned narratives on Georgia's victorious past, Georgia as the first Orthodox Christian country being under the special protection of God's Mother, Georgians' famous hospitality and marvelous food and wine, etc. provides a fertile ground for special pride and "self-celebration". Finally, Georgians have the same "identity fear" that their "national spirit" can be endangered by the ongoing rapid socio-cultural transformations, by the globalizing forces, by various religious sects and denominations coming to the country and threatening the Georgian Orthodox beliefs that is the only true religious beliefs, etc. But the two most alarming threats are represented, on the one hand, by the powerful northern neighbor (Russia) that has been trying to subordinate Georgia for two centuries and, on the other hand, by certain westernizing forces that, despite stimulating some positive innovations, may be harmful to the local traditions.

Poles would probably echo this discourse in a somewhat modest way. Analyzing Polish political discourse since 1989, Krzyzanowski observes that it is characterized by "the topos of national uniqueness, frequently paired with the topos of definition of the national role [that] appears to have the main role... the topos of national history is invoked to support the said uniqueness of Poland and portray Polish collectivity as exceptionally experienced throughout its history, and, therefore, as able to substantially contribute to the creation of the new Europe and its identity" (2009, pp. 103-104). In addition, "identity fear... that one's identity could

be affected... by what is going on around", even if it relates to the EU influences (nothing to say about the Russian factor), is not alien to Poles either. To return to the Polish political discourse in the recent period, it seems to underline that "Poland must remain conscious of the non-ideal character of the EU as the object of collective aspirations and motivations: it emphasizes that Poland must always remain watchful of its national interests irrespective of the developments within the EU" (*ibid.*, p. 105).

Thus, in all the presented cases there is an emphasis on one's "national uniqueness", consequently, "a tendency towards self-celebration", as well as "identitary fear" of one's national identity being forgotten or modified in the current changeable conditions. But can the "passionate nationalism" be an effective means of escaping stigmatization? Quite contrary, it evokes further stigmatization being viewed by the post-nationalist West as an expression of chauvinism, racism, and xenophobia, and usually results in various kinds of "external conditionality" supported by "a strong bargaining position" of Western Europe (Schwellnus, 2005, p. 52). For instance, it can be a warning for the countries hoping to ever be incorporated into the EU structures that their integration will be postponed to the even more indefinite future, or it can be the sanctions of different severity for the already acquired EU members.

I would risk arguing that the abovementioned "identitary concerns" (though with culture-specific variations) are presumably characteristic to most of the rather small and powerless nations, who need to establish themselves on the international scene by proving that they also possess certain outstanding qualities. Otherwise, who would ever care about these societies? Who would even notice their existence? I guess there are very few people in the world, who can show where Georgia is located on the world map. And although, I assume, more people would manage to find Romania on the world map, I still doubt they can say much about it; maybe the most prominent association would be the one with Dracula, consequently, "the land of vampires". This general unconcern and the lack of awareness are well evidenced by a TV program on Romania by the famous Romanian sportsmen living abroad, with the most incredible "facts" invented about the life in Romania and bearing a very obvious message: "You know nothing about Romania!" Concerning Poland, it is obviously in a better position due to the fact of being the largest Eastern European country, as well as the long history of Poles' migration to the West – both the US and Western Europe.

The reality described above seems quite sad but what makes it even harder is that the abovementioned unawareness works both ways. Neither Western Europe has a proper understanding of its Eastern counterpart, nor the other way around. What both parts have in their possession is a rich collection of “false representations, prejudice and ignorance”. As A. Pleșu ironically notes, “This situation reminds me of the beginning of a novel by Unamuno, in which we are told that when Pedro and Juan are talking to each other, in reality at least six persons talk to one another: the real Pedro and the real Juan, the image Pedro has of himself with the image Juan has of himself, and the image Pedro has of Juan with the image Juan has of Pedro. This is more or less what happens when Western Europe and Eastern Europe meet” (1999, p. 12).³

In what follows, I will try to illustrate the impact of the abovementioned multiple discourses on the attitudes to Westernization and particularly Europeanization among the youth of the so called new European countries (the cases of Romania and Poland) and the margins of Europe (the case of Georgia). I will discuss their possible strategies to deal with the westernizing forces focusing on the construction of ambivalent identities resulting from a dual aspiration to “both embrace and eschew Westernization” (Blum, 2007, p. 97).

Empirical Part

Ambivalence Related to the Definitions of Westernization and Europeanization

In order to discuss the Georgian, Romanian and Polish youth perceptions of Westernization and Europeanization, it is necessary to provide definitions of the concepts themselves. As the Merriam-Webster Dictionary informs us, Westernization can be defined as “conversion to or adoption of western traditions and techniques” (www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/westernization). However, this seemingly innocuous definition bears a lot of ambivalence (and risk) as it is followed by a comprehensive list of the terms “rhymed with westernization” composed of such contradictory concepts as emancipation and subordination, humanization and humiliation, affiliation and maladaptation, legalization and invalidation, purification and contamination, normalization and degeneration, authentication and falsification, as well as nationalization

and globalization, the latter (or maybe both?) being represented variously as Anglicization, Balkanization, and even Finlandization (though for some reason Americanization, which is quite often associated to Westernization, is missing). What we can infer from this definition is that Westernization has undoubtedly to do with power relations and normative regulations, has a tendency to make certain things look “normal” or even “real”, is associated to the perceptions of “purity and danger” (Douglas, 2000), and can promote both exclusion and inclusion, division and integration, nationalization and internationalization. Indeed, it seems a very ambivalent (and risky) process.

Europeanization, as a particular case of Westernization, is defined as “changes in the logic of behavior driven by the absorption of EU norms, attitudes, and ways of thinking” (Grabbe, 2005, p. 134). Thus, the ambivalent process of Westernization is narrowed down to a particular region -Europe or rather a particular conglomeration within Europe – the EU, and is viewed as the dissemination of this conglomeration’s norms and ways of thinking over the rest of Europe or even the indefinite others located on its margins who hope to ever become Europeans or even EU-ropeans. And it is a truly complex task as despite the fact that “it is very difficult to define Europe”, they try to challenge “an even more difficult problem: in the absence of an adequate definition, they must nonetheless find their way to integration” (Pleşu, 1999, p. 15). It is also noteworthy that Europeanization necessarily implies the “changes in the logic of behavior” of these societies, thus automatically assuming that their “norms, attitudes, and ways of thinking” can by no means comply with the ones of the EU and therefore need a thorough transformation, which can take place on several levels: formal, behavioral and discursive (Schimmelfennig, Sedelmeier, 2005).

The *formal* level of Europeanization implies “transposition of EU rules into national law or in the establishment of formal institutions and procedures in line with EU rules. According to the *behavioral* conception, adoption is measured to the extent to which behavior is rule-conforming. By contrast, according to the *discursive* conception of norms, adoption is indicated by incorporation of a rule as a positive reference into discourse among domestic actors. Such a reference may indicate that domestic actors are truly persuaded of a norm. Alternatively, it may merely imply that domestic actors ‘talk the talk’, pay lip service to the norm, or use it strategically in ‘rhetorical action’” [emphasis in the original] (Schimmelfennig, Sedelmeier, 2005, p. 8).

It is assumed that the discursive adoption is the easiest one, while the behavioral one is the most difficult; that the former cannot really influence the reality, while the latter is an indicator of the real changes taking place. It is also suggested that the formal adoption encourages the behavioral changes, consequently, having an impact on the actual social reality; while the discursive one might represent merely a “rhetorical action” derived of an actual transformative power. Nonetheless, I would like to focus on the discursive aspects of Europeanization and to disclose their power in influencing the behavioral ones; moreover, I attempt to illustrate how they can contribute to the (re)production of certain versions of social reality. I believe that “Europeanisation is... a form of discursive change which has been taking place in the diverse national settings of the CEE [Central and Eastern European] countries in the process of adjustment of their national-political cultures and practices (to those known) from the supranational arena of EU politics” (Krzyzanowski, 2009, p. 96); I also suppose that “if the individual narrative is repeated by many tellers in the same or similar canonical form, then it becomes a grand-narrative” (Galasinska, 2009, p. 190) that can shape certain experiences and practices. With these ideas in my mind, I have studied the youth discourses from the new European countries and the margins of Europe aiming to reveal the individual narratives, which have a tendency of becoming a “grand-narrative” and thus have a special power in the discursive construction of social reality.

The Youth Discourses on Westernization and Europeanization

What are the Georgian, Romanian and Polish youngsters’ associations in regard to Westernization/Europeanization? Their very first associations are related to the field of culture, particularly, popular music, TV programs, film industry, social media, style and fashion, food, architecture, celebration of holidays, and the lifestyle in general implying “the attitudes toward becoming more open – open to changes, open to something new, and also ready to change something, to do something new” (Raluca, 19). The next round of associations has to do with technological development, economic progress, and the Western languages as in all three countries the young people emphasize their preference for the following three languages: English, German, and French. Thus, Westernization can influence almost all aspects of socio-cultural life as it can be as diverse as Hollywood movies and American fast food, British rock bands, French fashion, German-style architecture, etc. And it

is noteworthy that although the first wave of Westernization is generally associated with Americanization, the second and most recent one is perceived to be closely connected to Europeanization and the impact of the EU, and not only in the new European countries but also in those on the margins of Europe.

One would assume that because of the long-lasting desire to be integrated in the EU that was finally fulfilled a few years ago and because of the fresh curiosity related to the recent membership, Europeanization would most likely be perceived by the new European countries as a largely positive phenomenon. One can even support this claim by the statistical data demonstrating that Romanians' and Poles' attitudes toward the EU are much more optimistic than those of other EU members, well evidenced by the fact that the approval rate of the EU documents, as well as the population's belief in the EU, is the highest in these two countries among the EU member states (Eurobarometers: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb_arch_en.htm). However, the reality is not as simple as that and the youth discourses reveal that there is a dual attitude toward the EU influences in the newly acquired EU countries: On the one hand, the young people acknowledge certain positive aspects of Europeanization; while on the other hand, the very same young people, in the very same narratives, express their discontent about those aspects that do not fit the local traditions and lifestyle, and are perceived as alien and artificially imposed over them; consequently, they openly criticize the EU for being "blind" to the local realities.

What aspects are considered as the positive outcomes of Europeanization? Both Romanian and Polish youth state that the most obvious positive impact is that the borders have been opened and now they can freely travel to the Western part of Europe both to study and to work. They also emphasize that the EU membership has provided their countries with new opportunities to develop economy and infrastructure as the EU supports the implementation of certain projects in this direction. However, they stress that both the former and the latter have their own side effects that cause lots of confusion.

One of the examples can be cited from the interview with 21-year-old Adriana, who talks about the EU projects being implemented in Romania:

Definitely, there are some changes. I am thinking of some projects that are supported by and implemented with the EU money as the EU is supposed to help us develop or whatever good intentions it has☺; but there are

always lots of stories around them as quite often these projects turn out to be a complete failure and the EU doesn't really care about how they are implemented! For example, the case when they organized the computer classes for disabled people with the idea that it would help them in the future employment. The problem is that their backgrounds have no relation with a computer; they actually don't need a computer. They have only learned how to turn a computer on and off and how to use the Word but they still cannot use it for employment. And there are still the debates on whether they need these classes at all, meanwhile lots of money being spent on it and no one really interested to go and discuss this issue with these people themselves.

Thus, in this narrative the EU's "good intentions" are considered as futile being perceived as a mere declaration of the EU's missionary function to "help [others] develop", while not "caring about" the actual outcomes. This effort is perceived as "a complete failure" as, according to the respondent, the EU is not interested in what those, who are supposed to get its support, actually think of it.

Another example of the EU's project to civilize, as well as to make the locals more humanistic, is presented in Elena's (24) narrative. She brings a case of her village, located close to Bucharest, where they

always killed a pig with a knife and could eat it whenever they wanted so. Now there is a new EU regulation that they should kill a pig using an injection and necessarily under a vet's supervision. The idea is that it is more humanistic but the people respond to it with suspicion thinking they are controlled as a few years ago the vet had to go from a house to a house to check how many pigs and cows each person had. Well, the villagers still practice the knife method though they cannot openly do it. Probably they think: 'that's how we have always been doing' but they also consider the new method as a waste of time (you need to wait for a vet) and money (you need to buy an injection), which doesn't really make the society more humanistic!

Thus, the implementation of the EU regulation is again perceived as a mere performance of being humanistic that cannot really increase the level of humanism in the society. But what it actually does is raising the population's anger for being controlled and causing their dissatisfaction with being restricted to do things in a traditional way. However, the young people are well aware of the EU's "strong bargaining position" and realize

that, to quote Elena's words again, "it is useless to complain: Why should they tell us how to eat our meat? It is like: Why should those, who invest, tell us what to do?"

One more issue seen by the youth as an outcome of the EU regulations is that they might provoke more confrontations and conflicts than it happened before. One of the examples suggested by my respondent is the case of vodka "Palinka" and the debate on which country is authorized to produce it. As 23-year-old Alexandra explained to me,

now it's all about the question of standardization and who will own the 'Palinka' patent and who is better than whom... Now Hungarians have got the patent and only they can call it 'Palinka', while we [Romanians] and Poles also have it. This evil at some point creates more conflicts than it was before and instead of adapting to the EU, the EU is forcefully assimilating us, which is a big [in a prolonged manner] mistake because we are so happy thinking the EU is coming and helping, the international monetary fund is giving money and we'll get our salaries next month and so on, but there are many other problems the EU would have never thought of. And we didn't envisage them because we had no idea; we just wanted to be in!

According to this narrative, the EU regulations or standardization may provoke a conflict and even an ethnic rivalry ("who is better than whom") among the neighboring countries, instead of solving them. Furthermore, the respondent states that the EU strategy implies not the "adaptation" but "forceful assimilation," which, she thinks, goes against the people's expectations and ruins their trust in the EU. The whole narrative is constructed based on the dual representations: One the one hand, "we are so happy" and believe in the future and the economic prosperity the EU is bringing, while on the other hand, the EU is escalating the conflicts among the neighbors, it is "forcefully assimilating us", and if only we had known... The question is: If only you had known, would you have been against joining the EU? I am pretty confident that the very same young people would say that they would still have been eager to join the EU and that they are still eager to be its members.

Besides discussing the twofold character of the EU regulations, the young people have reflected on the ambiguity caused by crossing the borders: All the respondents recognize that after joining the EU it is much easier to go abroad to both study and work, and it is a common fact that Eastern Europeans migrate to Western Europe. The descriptions of their

experiences of staying abroad are amazingly similar and while listening to their stories one can experience a constant *déjà vu*. The Polish youth regretfully admit that “people don’t have a good opinion about” them in Britain and Germany (those European countries to which Poles most often migrate), while the Romanian youth disclose that they have “a bad name” in Italy, Spain and France (the countries to which Romanians usually migrate). Thus, the ease of crossing the borders can be considered as both a success (new opportunities to study and work) and a failure (negative stigmatization by a recipient society). It is remarkable that the “failure discourse” related to migration is missing only in 2 interviews conducted in Romania (out of 33 in-depth interviews and 5 focus groups) and 1 interview conducted in Poland (out of 14 in-depth interviews and 3 focus groups).

The following two examples represent the Romanian and Polish youths’ narratives related to their trips abroad:

When I am in Germany, I try to speak German so that people think I live here for a long time and I am a part of their country, because I have a family there and my cousin told me: When you speak Polish here, they think you are stupid, they want to go away from you, etc. Some people abroad are ashamed of our country® (Agnieszka, 20).

What struck me in this narrative was a sudden shift from the first to the third person! My respondent did not conceal that she avoided revealing her nationality in Germany though was ashamed to openly admit that she was among those, who were ashamed of their own country. Probably national sentiments are quite strong even when individuals are ashamed of their nationality.

Many Romanians are ashamed of their national identity because of their compatriots’ behaviors abroad. This is what happened to us in Italy: We were the Erasmus program students and were going to organize a Romanian party, four of us. But suddenly there was that episode of the Romanian or Gipsy [pausing here and emphasizing that either could be] crime against an Italian woman and we were in panic. We immediately started speaking English instead of Romanian because our parents would call us and say: ‘Don’t speak Romanian - otherwise some angry Italians might be around, understand you speak Romanian and revenge!’ It was the first time we experienced a racist issue... There was a sudden hope when the Pope appeared on the balcony in Vatican and preached about tolerance.

You feel a kind of relief but then you hear some people were beaten in a supermarket just because they were Romanians®. As the Erasmus program students we were supposed to exchange the values and be proud of it, and the weekend we spent was really scary! (Alina, 24).

Here, again, my interviewee does not say anything about her being ashamed of her nationality; rather it is the story of being scared of an offensive treatment by others. However, returning to the very first sentence in this paragraph and realizing that the rest of the paragraph is the evidence for the first sentence, which actually represents the main argument, it becomes clear that the whole story was meant as an example of “Romanians [being] ashamed of their national identity” because of what their fellow Romanians or maybe even Gipsies (often perceived as the ones who spoil the name of Romanians) do abroad.

In this context the case of Georgia provokes a special interest. Although Georgia is not a part of the EU, the desire to join it is very strong and the official political discourses always emphasize the country’s foreign policy priority to join the EU and the NATO. The recent nation-wide surveys illustrate that more than 80% of the population supports Georgia’s integration into the EU. Moreover, 51% of the population expresses partial or full trust in the EU, which is higher than the one in the courts (29%), the media (32%), the parliament (34%) or the government (34%) (Eurasia Partnership Foundation, CRRRC, 2011). However, again, the reality is not as simple as that and the in-depth interviews with Georgian youth reveal that despite being optimistic about the EU integration, Georgian young people are nevertheless concerned about its side effects thinking that

all the changes have their positive and negative sides. Joining the EU will probably be beneficial in the economic terms as it might bring more investments; however, I am afraid, we will have to adjust to lots of different regulations that are alien to our country. I guess it will cause lots of objections and at least the inner protest of Georgians, who cannot stand being controlled, especially from the outside, and consider it as a form of subordination harming their self-esteem and pride (Sandro, 20).

Thus, the narrative reveals the fear of Georgian youth that alongside some positive developments in the area of economics, the EU may also impose lots of various regulations that do not really fit the local reality,

therefore, being perceived by the locals as an intrusion harming their national sentiments and causing “at least [their] inner protest.”

But what is even more harming to the Georgians’ “hyperbolic pride” is the discourses on “our compatriots’ shameful behavior abroad”. One of the vivid examples is represented by the famous case of the Stradivarius violin theft in Austria. The most shameful part of this story as perceived by Georgians was the fact that a Georgian male, who stole the violin, had no idea what he had stolen, and the whole rumor in Georgia was around the issue of the world getting to know how “backward” Georgians are. Even the thief’s short interview illustrates that he regretted not the fact of stealing itself but the fact that he did not know he had stolen a Stradivarius violin. And the young people ironically noted that Georgia would never become the part of the EU as after this case everyone would fear that all the Stradivarius violins would disappear in Europe. It is a good example of how a particular case perceived in the light of spoiling the name of a country can produce a nation-wide “failure discourse”.

Reflecting on the narratives presented in this subchapter, one gets an obvious impression that all of them are amazingly similar and if not mentioning particular locations in the text, they could be ascribed to the youth of any of the abovementioned country. Moreover, I would say that the following quote by a Georgian respondent representing his perception of Europeanization accurately describes the youth attitudes from other two countries as well:

What is good about joining the EU is that you won’t need to go through all these stages of visa application, which is really humiliating! But I see another danger here: Although I am not very proud of us and our deeds abroad, I still think that it is so easy for the powerful countries to find a scapegoat and it is so difficult for the powerless ones to prove their truth... (Giorgi, 21).

Ambivalence Related to the Impact of Westernization on Local Traditions

One of the hot topics provoking lots of discussions among Georgian, Romanian and Polish youth is the impact of Westernization/ Europeanization on the local traditions. This question is an obvious source of controversy and ambivalence, basic arguments revolving around whether the local traditions are endangered by various cultural trends

coming from the West or whether these trends support the re-invention of tradition or “specificity” (Ditchev, 2005, p. 247); whether they cause total transformation or encourage maintaining the “changing same” (Gilroy, 1994), whether they are blindly adopted or creatively adapted to the local reality.

What is amazing about the youth discourses from all three countries is that despite the fact that two of them are the EU members, while one aspires to be so, and there is a constant attempt to prove one’s Europeaness in the official and popular discourses of all three countries, the young people still emphasize the Eastern character of their societies or the domination of certain Eastern traits in them:

Although today the Western influences are stronger, we still have a kind of Eastern spirit, one of the examples of which is this Eastern laziness so characteristic to Georgians (Tina, 19).

I think the Western for us [Romanians] is more external, while the Eastern is more internal. The Eastern influences us more on a mental, philosophical level, while the Western – on an external, behavioral level (Raluca, 19).

Well, for a really long time, I mean for a few centuries, Poland was more an Eastern culture than the Western one, and there was an Ottoman influence, and after the World War II we were artificially moved to the West. So, our identity was artificially changed and since this change we don’t really see the connection as a new nation that appears in Europe (Janus, 21).

Thus, the Eastern characteristics can be represented in different contexts in a culture-specific way, starting from “Eastern laziness” and ending with a “philosophical level”, and might even cause certain confusion regarding one’s place in Europe.

Despite emphasizing their Eastern characteristics, the very same young people express their surprise that their countries need to constantly prove that they are European, that they belong to Europe. My Georgian respondents often reminded me of the following well known expression: “I am a Georgian, therefore I am a European”; my Polish respondents stated that “Poland is and always was a European country”; and one of my Romanian respondents even recalled an emotional episode regarding this issue:

I remember, when I was in the final grade of high school, there was an essay contest and we were asked to write an essay on how European we perceived ourselves to be. I was very angry as I didn't understand why I was asked how European I felt – I am in Europe anyway, it is Europe! It's a tricky question: How European do you feel? It's certainly imposed from somewhere; it's not a natural question. I don't stay up at night thinking how European I am. Somebody else raises all these questions putting them on the public agenda. By asking them, you turn this process (the EU integration) into the artificial one... And I didn't write anything! (Andrea, 23).

Based on the last narrative, not only my respondent is angry that being territorially located in Europe Romanians still need to prove their Europeanness but also she is persuaded that this discourse is imposed over Romanians from the outside, which complicates the EU integration process itself, making it artificial that is stripping it of its authenticity. Some young people even go further and state that only after a country becomes a part of the EU, is it perceived as a "true European" country; otherwise, even its territorial location in Europe would not help it to be European: "There was a commercial on the national TV about our [Romanian] peasants, who were visited by an official from the city and he was explaining how wonderful it is now, that finally they are Europeans, true Europeans, and it was like: What are you talking about?" (Vlad, 20). Despite the young people's surprise or anger, I should emphasize that while mentioning "Europe" in their narratives, they themselves often unconsciously imply merely Western Europe, and if they want to include the new European countries, they usually add the adjectives "Eastern" or "Central".

Putting this issue aside, let's focus on how this regional mixture of traditions (both the Eastern and European), as depicted by the youth, is influenced by Westernization/Europeanization. The youth narratives reveal their dual perceptions again.

Georgian youngsters state that

the Western thinking and lifestyle is different from ours – Westerners are individualists, while we are collectivists; Westerners don't have strong family ties, while they are really strong in Georgia; Westerners teach their kids to strive for their rights, while we still teach them to respect elders, etc. It's the whole socialization process and it cannot really be changed like that as our traditions have been established throughout the centuries and they are congruent to our nature, so it would be extremely stupid to

try to change them only to prove the West that we are so modern, we are like them (Tako, 21).

Thus, in the young people's opinion, the centuries-long traditions, which make an inseparable part of Georgian "nature," cannot be substituted by the Western ones just to prove the West how modern Georgians are. Moreover, even the traditions that are criticized as outdated by the youngsters themselves in a daily life, still seem quite appealing to them:

What I like about our culture is our tradition to... be emotionally close to your family. Being a youngster in our society, you feel safe knowing that your parents will always support you both emotionally and materially. On the other hand, you never fear to become older knowing that your children will never leave you without attention and support, and you will never spend your last days in solitude in a shelter for elders (Keti, 19).

Many Georgian youngsters stress the difference between the Georgian and Western socialization patterns and the values they convey, and express their concern that the attempt to imitate the West will endanger the local traditions as it means that the Georgian family ties will loosen, emotional support will be substituted by competition, etc. However, paradoxically, the very same young people express their desire to gain both material and emotional independence from their parents, to become more individualist and career oriented, and they even complain that the Georgian perception of independence "still implies dependency on others":

All of us aspire to become more modern though still retaining all those traditional things... I mean that we need to get free, need to independently decide on the future career, future spouse, future life... It seems there is certain freedom but it still implies dependency on others. This is the Georgian reality (Mary, 20).

The very same ambivalent attitude to the impact of Westernization on the local traditions is characteristic to both Romanian and Polish youth. On the one hand, they complain that under the Western influences the local traditions are being abandoned and forgotten, say, the family ties have loosened and the Western-type cold relations have established between parents and their children; while on the other hand, they think

that despite looking up to the West, they still manage to preserve their traditions. For instance, one can hear such contradictory ideas within the same narratives: "Here, in Poland, we adore everything that comes from the West. It is still a recent trend, after joining the EU. So, we have this feeling that the Western traditions are better than the Polish ones, which we don't want any more. In this way people think they are more modern and cool" (Joanna, 18); while after a few minutes the same respondent announced: "Polish young people are somehow in traditions and they want to keep them. Although they try to mix them with the Western thinking, they still keep them." Thus, there is the discourse on no longer wanting one's traditions vs. being still "in traditions" and "still keeping them".

Here is a passage from an interview with a Romanian respondent, who presents similar contradictory ideas within the same narrative:

Romanians are like that - so close to the national traditions but so willing to understand what the Westerners say. I think right now people are really, really interested in the EU standards or the Western world, as we say. Ya, but they are kind of neglecting their traditions (Marina, 20).

How come that within three lines we encounter two different realities – "Romanians are... so close to the national traditions" and "they are kind of neglecting their traditions"? How come that the narrative of "what I like about our culture is our traditions" coexists with the perception that "the Western traditions are better"? How come that the Romanian and Polish discourses are so amazingly similar and, at the same time, so close to the Georgian ones? I guess we should consider the Western factor in this context. It seems that the Western gaze bears a special significance for all three countries ("What [will] the Westerners say!") and they desperately try to prove the West, which is usually symbolized by the EU, that they are "modern and cool". Two different types of "conditionality" are in play here – the new European countries seek the EU endorsement; while those on the margins of Europe seek the EU membership, even if it is postponed to an indefinite future.

The ambivalence related to the Western cultural influences on the local traditions is vividly represented by the youth narratives on public holidays such as Valentine's Day or Halloween. On the one hand, one can hear lots of complaints about neglecting the local holidays, while on the other hand, it is stated that the influx of the Western trends even

encourages the recollection and re-invention of the local traditions. The following two passages are good examples of both discourses:

Western culture has a strong impact on our popular culture, especially the celebrations like Valentine's Day, Halloween, etc. Our [Romanian] Valentine's day is on February 24 but, unfortunately, nobody celebrates it any more, all of them celebrate February 14 and all the shops have imported cards and souvenirs. But why should we celebrate someone's holiday if we have our own tradition? (Claudia, 18)

vs.

Our [Romanian] Valentine's Day is called "Dragobete" and is supposed to be celebrated on February 24. Most of the young people I know, including myself, discovered it after Valentine's Day on February 14 was introduced. If we look at it from this perspective, it does not seem to be a tradition! I don't like this term "tradition" - I think it's often used to search for some 'historical truths' that are actually not there. People change and traditions might be just a way of 'selling things.' It's very good for trying to manufacture your identity! And if I think carefully about it, probably these Western flows helped the traditional trends to float, the national identity to be expressed, to be more visible (Andrea, 23).

Thus, we encounter two controversial opinions about the local holiday: according to the first one, the local celebration is abandoned because of the one that was imported from the West together with its accompanying commercial stuff; while according to the second, only due to the imported holiday were the locals able to rediscover their own one, which had been forgotten for quite a while, therefore, could hardly be considered as a local tradition. Moreover, thanks to the Western import the national identity was reactivated and asserted. Thus, the Western has encouraged the re-invention of local tradition.

If we shift from Romania to Poland, the very same statement will be true in the context of the Halloween celebration.

Instead of celebrating this stupid Halloween, we'd rather celebrate our All Saints' Day the following day (Pavel, 19)

vs.

Halloween is on October 31 and we have our holiday – All Saints' Day on November 1. We all go to the cemeteries and burn candles for the ancestors. And when I make a pumpkin, I don't think about a trick or something joyful but about all these people who I will be commemorating next day. I think we cannot happily celebrate Halloween if we don't remember our own family and ancestors (Monica, 20).

Thus, on the one hand, the Western holiday is accused for shading the local one, while on the other hand, the Western one can be considered as a preparation for the local one and it is believed that they can peacefully coexist, both being celebrated in their own way.

The ambivalence related to traditions is further exemplified by the case of religion. In most of the discourses the young people from all the presented countries consider religion as a part of tradition. I will illustrate the reason for such a perception based on the Romanian case though I dare to say that the very same observation is true for Georgia (also an Orthodox country) and Poland (a Catholic country).

From a spiritual point of view Romania is a predominantly orthodox nation, a good aspect for some and a curse for others, like the literary critique Eugen Lovinescu. In his book, *History of modern Romanian civilization*, Lovinescu (1997) states that orthodoxy, with its eastern orientation, has slowed down Romanian modernization. The predominant Orthodox Church insisted that she be called National church and even today orthodoxy is considered by many as the most relevant identity factor. In other words, when you say you are Romanian you say you are orthodox (Boari, Gherghina, 2009, p. 11).

In the same vein, Georgians state that being Georgian means being Orthodox and that Orthodoxy is an inseparable part of their national identity as it was the religion that helped Georgians strive against the Muslim neighbors, who were invading the country for many centuries, thus being the main factor in preserving the national identity. The most famous national slogan since the 19th century independence movement has been the following one: "Language, Homeland, Religion". Even in the recent past, when the South-Western part of Georgia, which was under the Ottoman rule for more than three centuries and whose population was predominantly Muslim, was regained, an active process of "returning to the Georgian roots" was initiated (which is still in progress) and the

population started to baptize as Orthodox as an indicator of their true Georgianness (Pelkmans, 2006).

Although it represents a Catholic country, the Polish case is quite close to the Romanian and Georgian ones. Poland is quite a conventional Christian country and the religion is perceived as a part of Polish identity. As one of my respondents remarked: "Here, in Poland, we call it not a Catholic Church but a Polish Catholic Church! These are different things" (Anita, 19).

Despite its historical importance, religion gained a new function and power in the post-communist period. The scholars studying the region confirm that after the collapse of the communist regime "(r)eligious sentiments reached unprecedented levels throughout the region, both in countries like Poland... and Romania... religion, alongside nationalism, stepped in to fill the ideological void... and churches assumed new roles in shaping the eastern European democracy" (Stan, Turcescu, 2007, pp. 3-4).

Despite the fact that religion is intertwined with national identity in all the presented cases, the youth discourses reveal that it is also considered as a factor holding these countries back and interrupting the ongoing modernization and globalization processes. This duality is vividly expressed in their narratives: On the one hand, the young people would share that

I try to fast each Wednesday and Friday, and I don't eat meat at all. It's a combination of religion and personal opinion. I think it's a part of our tradition and although we, Romanians, are not an Eastern culture any more, we went beyond our traditions long time ago, I still cannot say that no one follows the traditions today (Adrian, 24).

Thus, the young people still try to follow religious norms perceived as a part of their cultural tradition and although they think these traditions were abandoned long time ago, they admit that the part of youth still preserves them. On the other hand, one would often hear the following narrative:

I think most of the young people do not care about the religion as they are pushed back by all those stupid things the church does! There is absolutely no case of a justice system regarding a church issue and I think that's where corruption is officialized because you never get an invoice for the bills you pay to the church and you pay all the time – when you get married, when children are baptized, when someone dies, and you have to pay an

annual or biannual tax, just because you live in a neighborhood of some church you should pay to this church, etc. And this is all 'black money' in a sense... Our church is like a country within the country, and that's how not only me but also all of my friends without an exception perceive it (Andrei, 25).

In addition, most of my Romanian respondents admit that even if their peers possess religious beliefs they try to hide this fact because of the embarrassment caused by the deeds of the church, and even if the young people cross themselves passing a church, they still deny it in order to prove that they are "modern and cool". Actually, the question of crossing oneself while passing a church is a source of ambivalence itself as another part of my respondents is persuaded that it is just a habit and not an expression of one's beliefs.

Thus, we get a truly complicated picture with the young people both trying to be religious and not caring about religion, as well as crossing oneself as both an expression of one's religiosity and a mere habit distant from religious beliefs. There is an agreement on one question though – that the young people are ashamed of the church's deeds and think that it's the main reason for the youngsters' stepping back from the religion. We can briefly summarize these ideas quoting Elena's (24) words: "I would say there is both religiosity and rebellion to the church here".

The very same dualistic attitude is characteristic to Georgian youth, who would, on the one hand, state that "I highly respect our religious traditions and I think Georgian Orthodox church is one of the most humanistic" (Nino, 17); furthermore, there are even such groups on facebook as "I love my patriarch", whose members are lots of young people. While on the other hand, the very same youngsters would complain: "I am really ashamed of how intolerant our church is to all the minorities, whether it is religious, sexual or even ethnic. And sometimes I blush when listening to our priests' preaching that all the evil comes from the West" (Ana, 18). Thus, Georgian Orthodox church is represented as both humanistic and intolerant, accusing the West for certain "evils" occurring in the society and supporting the argument that Eastern Christianity is not very open to the changes coming from the West.

The readers will have a *déjà vu* again while getting familiar with the Polish case. Polish youth complain that their peers

are not proud of the traditions and they don't understand their role because before we had only Polish traditions and now we can compare them with those of the West and think that they have the better ones. It's obvious that it's an influence of the West. And it influences all the aspects of our life – political, cultural, religious... (Natalia, 19).

In this narrative the West is considered as the one endangering Polish traditions, including the religious ones, and the rest of the narrative represents some kind of call for defending the local traditions. However, oddly enough, the very same respondent within the same focus group discussion would say that

the role of religion is weakening today because the church needs a reform [and other respondents would strongly agree with her]. The church doesn't really follow the changes and it's very conservative. That's why young people don't go to the church. I don't go to the church myself. In addition, in Poland the church is a big politician.

Others would confirm her point bringing their own evidence:

And the church doesn't do anything for young people here, it doesn't support the young people at all [and here everyone would agree with this respondent]. They say: God will help you to find a job. But why are not they founding some unemployment groups or support groups? There is a reason for that though - the young people can look at the church and say: You have lots of land, you have houses and money. Where did you get it from? And why don't you use it for charity? (Paul, 20).

So, the Polish case, like the other cases presented above, illustrates that the young people consider the church as quite conservative, unable to follow the ongoing changes, and even "stale" (as Victor (24) calls it), while at the same time rather politicized (church as "a big politician"). However, in all three cases there is a clear distinction between the church as the somewhat shameful and the religion as a respectable part of national identity that should be preserved and protected; there is "both religiosity and rebellion to the church".

Thus, the young people express their ambivalent attitude to religion caught between its presentable and shameful aspects. Concerning the impact of the West, it gains a special importance in this context (again provoking ambivalent attitudes) as it is assumed that although it can

encourage some reforms in the church backing more tolerance and less conservatism, simultaneously it can endanger the local religious traditions and weaken the role of religion among the youth, who would show off by abandoning rather old religious practices in order to prove the West they are “modern and cool”.

Ambivalence Related to the Perception of the Western Concept of Freedom

After discussing the ambivalence related to the impact of Westernization on the local traditions, it is important to get familiar with the youth perceptions of the Western concept of freedom. This topic is most often discussed in the context of post-communist transformations and is a source of ambivalence again. On the one hand, the young people are certain that the collapse of the communist regime brought freedom to their countries, while on the other hand, one can encounter numerous examples of communist nostalgia in their discourses; on the one hand, they state that communism represented an obvious threat to national identities melting them in a communist pot, while on the other hand, they see the very same danger in the current Western trends, celebrating the post-nationalist era; on the one hand, they state that the Western influences enhance the level of freedom in their societies, while on the other hand, they are concerned that their peers might not know how to deal with the newly acquired freedoms and might perceive them in a “distorted” or “exaggerated” way.

Why do the young people need to refer to the communist past in order to discuss the recent developments in their countries? As D. Galasinski argues on the example of the Polish post-communist discourses, “communism, its discourses and the discourses about it, still provide the framework within which the discourses of new reality are created. It is in contrast and in opposition to communism that the new reality is assessed and constructed” (2009, p. 215).

The young people from the presented countries are persuaded that the collapse of the communist regime brought all types of freedom to their societies, be it political, cultural, religious, even sexual, etc., which is unanimously considered as a positive phenomenon. However, they state that it also brought certain instability and insecurity, which provokes “a huge wave of communist nostalgia” and not only among the elders, who experienced the communist past, but also among the youngsters, who

were born and raised in the post-communist conditions but adopt and incorporate the elders' nostalgic discourses in their repertoire.

One of the vivid examples is Victor's (24) narrative and while listening to him it is hard to believe that these ideas belong to a person raised in the post-communist epoch. My question was about the impact of the EU integration on Romania, to which he responded in the following way:

We did get the access to information and the opportunity to migrate but that's not what we hoped for, evidenced by a huge wave of communist nostalgia in Romania a few months ago. Economically we don't do well now and we didn't do well then but at least then we had some social stability. The state took care of the citizens: when you left school you already got a job, health system was more organized and it was compulsory to undergo a health check, etc. Certainly, communism had its dark sides – this secret police and so on, but in the communist period Romania produced a lot of things, we had an industrial infrastructure but now we don't have anything; everything has been either destroyed or privatized and turned into something completely different. We are not as productive as we used to be, that's what I know for sure. As I understand, we import immensely, we practically import almost everything. We don't seem to be able to do anything.

Thus, a 24-year-old person, who is supposed to hardly remember anything from the communist past, turned out to "remember" lots of positive things and although he recalls its negative aspects as well, the latter are obviously outweighed by the positive ones. Here we can trace the origins of another "failure discourse" on how "productive" we used to be in the (communist) past and how unable we are "to do anything" now.

This "failure discourse" becomes even more passionate in another respondent's narrative, which is another example of how the communist nostalgia is reproduced in the youth discourses. George (19) brings his own evidence of how the collapse of the communist regime and the spread of capitalism "downgraded" Romania: "Personally I don't believe in democracy and capitalism because it downgrades us, it has already downgraded us. So the politics of the Western countries, which they import to Romania, took Romania down. For example, during the communist era the whole subway was constructed in Bucharest, while within the last 22-23 years only three more stations have been added." The same line of thoughts: we used to be productive and built then, and we do nothing now.

Polish youngsters echo their Romanian counterpart's ideas sharing the following observation: "In my parents' and especially grandparents' generations I have seen many people with the communist nostalgia. That time is considered as more socially secure. They say: 'You finished school and knew you would get a job. Nowadays, look what has happened, so many young people are unemployed!' I have heard such things from the young people too but probably they repeated what they had heard from their parents" (Nina, 20). Analyzing the Polish post-communist discourses, which he calls the "narratives of disenfranchised self", D. Galasinski draws a conclusion that his interviewees try to "balance out its [communist] provisions of social security with the political repression" (2009, p. 214) that is especially noticeable in Victor's (24) narrative. Moreover, according to him, they implicitly or even overtly call for "Komuno wroc! – 'Communism, come back!'. This is one of the slogans forged in the times of post-communism, expressing the nostalgia of the times of job security, of life with barely any decisions to make" (*ibid.*, p. 215).

The very same situation is true about the elders, especially the grandparents' generation, in Georgia; however, not in a single narrative did my interviewees show any signs of communist nostalgia or, to be more precise, any traces of reproducing the elders' nostalgic discourses. Can the possible reason be the recent encounters or rather an ever-lasting conflict (since 1989) with the powerful northern neighbor commonly associated with the flag-keeper of communism? Can it be ascribed to the fact that Russia is not considered as just a Romanian or Polish issue but the one that the EU is supposed to deal with, while Georgians perceive Russia as a constant threat against their cultural and even physical existence? Can it be ascribed to the fact that the dissolution of the great hopes that the EU membership would bring immediate and substantial improvements has produced a wide "failure discourse" in Romania and Poland encouraging the youth to search in the recent past for the stories of success, resulted in the adoption of the elders' discourse of communist nostalgia? These questions need a thorough investigation, which is beyond the scope of my research.

Another dualistic discourse regarding the communist era vs. the capitalist one is how the abovementioned countries' national identities were oppressed under the communist regime and how, getting free after its collapse and the exposure to the Western democratic flows, their identities are threatened again. Thus, both the communist and capitalist regimes endanger national identities and the freedoms promoted by them

are just performances, "spectacle freedoms". As one of my respondents explained: "We used to live in a spectacle and now we live in a spectacle too... You have simulacra of free information and you have simulacra of freedom of movement... I mean, you have it and you don't. It is a 'spectacle freedom'" (Ana, 25). Based on this narrative, both the communist and capitalist regimes pretend to provide free access to information and freedom of movement but in both cases it is merely a spectacle. They cannot be perceived as securing freedom assuming they threaten the sense of national.

And as always, the young people's twofold discourses go hand in hand: the discourse of the communist regime endangering their national identity coexists with the one of communist nostalgia, and the discourse on the Western liberal model bringing emancipation coexists with the one of the West "wiping out the traditions" and harming the national identity. For instance, Romanian youngsters would state: "People say the communists suppressed all our national identity, so we didn't have a chance to grow. Now that we are a free and modern country, we simply copy the elements of national identity from the Western countries. That's why we don't have a clearly defined national identity; we have copied most of it from someone else" (from a focus group discussion with the BA students of informatics at Bucharest University). Thus, according to this narrative, despite the fact that today Romania is considered to be "a free and modern country", the national is still suppressed under the Western influences and "a clearly defined national identity" is lacking. The very similar narratives are reproduced by Polish youth, who challenge the Western liberal model stating that "actually, this 'liberal model' does not have much to do with liberal ideas. I think it rather wipes out our traditions and makes a serious problem to the Polish identity" (from a focus group discussion with the MA students of musicology at Jagiellonian University in Krakow). Concerning Georgian youngsters, they directly call their peers for action to "protect [their] deeply cultural from the outside attempts to demolish it" complaining that "the epoch of imitating others and being either pro-Russian or pro-American or something else hasn't yet ended in Georgia and the epoch of being pro-Georgian hasn't started by now" (Anano, 19).

One of the remains of the communist regime or "colonial thinking", as some of the youngsters call it, is the state of passivity. Both Romanian and Polish youth are persuaded that it is their national feature and comes from the past long before the communist rule though it gained a new incite

and a renewed content in the communist period. Romanian youngsters usually recall the legend of “Miorita” and bring it as a support to their argument of the nation-wide passivity, then shifting to the communist past to provide additional examples. Passivity seems to be perceived as the major feature of Romanian youth as being asked to characterize their peers, Romanian interviewees almost exclusively emphasize passivity as their most common trait; the next feature in their list is the constant complaint on how passive they are even not trying to change it. Thus, both passivity and complaining about it (but also complaining that people complain about their passivity) are considered as the most characteristic traits of Romanian youth. According to Adrian (24), “the young people live in a catatonic state though they think they are doing something. In fact, real changes are perceived quite painfully as they don’t have any resistance”. Vlad (20) agrees that “We [Romanians] usually take things as they are; we are quite an unprotesting nation”. While Alexandra (23) adds that “Romanians like to complain a lot: they complain about being passive and not doing anything to change their life. We also have the people who complain that people around them complain about not doing anything.”

Georgian youth seem to enjoy complaining about their passivity as well. They would complain about their peers’ unwillingness to change their life; furthermore, they would complain about their parents being unwilling to encourage their independence and activity; in addition, they would complain about the governments’ inability to provide proper conditions for them to get actively involved in social and political life. Concerning Polish youth, they do not seem to be characterized by so many layers of complaining about the passivity in their society though they definitely mention it as one of their characteristic features: “Yes, we are afraid of changes because we are afraid of freedom of choice as it is connected to certain responsibilities and activities, while we are quite passive and unresisting” (from a focus group discussion with the BA students of journalism at Krakowska Academia).

Thus, based on these narratives, the youth from all the presented societies characterize themselves as quite passive and unresisting. However, we encounter another paradox here: this passivity or non-resistance might be a means of cultural, social or political resistance! Several examples can support this argument: Andrei (25), a film director, shares his opinion about the Westerners’ perception of Romanians as somewhat “exotic” and Romanians’ inability to resist being labeled; therefore, he suggests that Romanians should at least take an advantage of being “exoticized”

getting either material (say, the EU funding) or some other benefits from the West as an outcome of their “passive manipulation”. Another example of passive resistance is a “passivity action”, which was organized by the Bucharest University professors and students in November 2011 to protest against cutting off the budget in the higher educational system.

Alongside emphasizing both catatonic and active passivity, which seems to coexist among the inquired youth, in the very same narratives they describe themselves as overtly active and eager to initiate changes. Romanian respondents would tell me:

I don't see young Romanians as being afraid of changes or not able to contribute to them. In fact, I guess, they are willing to make changes and even when they cannot openly do it, they have their own way... There is a word in Romanian called 'shmeker.' It means being smart in a tricky way, like getting away with all sorts of things even if one doesn't have a clue what's that about. And one can be active in a shmeker way. We can really be shmekers☺ (Andrea, 23).

Polish youngsters would state that they are “rather active. To take an example of student life, lots of exhibitions or film festivals are organized by them, not just as an art but also as an expression of socio-political activity. They want to try something new and they are open to different possibilities” (from a focus group discussion with the BA students of journalism at Krakowska Academia). While Georgian youth would boast that no changes take place in the country without their initiative: “It usually comes from us. We are the main ones to initiate changes!” (Maia, 18).

Thus, how is it possible to be passive, even to the extent of being catatonic and afraid of changes with their accompanying uncertainties, and simultaneously to be active and eager to initiate changes? It seems this duality is quite possible in all three cases we have discussed. Furthermore, there is a duality in perceiving the freedom gained in the recent years: the young people think that despite the positive aspects of obtaining the so called Western freedoms, there is a danger of “overdoing” them as, to quote one of my respondents, “everybody understands freedom and democracy in the way they want; therefore, there is a kind of confusion about freedom, democracy and capitalism” (Sofia, 20). This confusion is often attributed to the “transitional state”. As A. Pleșu observes, “(n)ow, after ‘the great change’, you are obliged to discover the darker shades of

freedom (those usually referred to as ‘the problems of transition’)) (1999, p. 12).

To make sense of what the “distortion”, “overdoing” or “exaggeration” of freedom may imply, let’s get familiar with the youth perceptions regarding this issue. Discussing the changes in Romanian society as an outcome of Westernization, Mihai (21) shared the following observation:

I think the main issue is that we didn’t take well this liberty, the concept of freedom itself. We perceived it differently than the West does. In the beginning we pushed it a little bit more, we overdid it. Being too enthusiastic about this liberty, we just overdid!

My Polish respondents would definitely agree with Mihai as, according to them,

After the collapse of communism, we suddenly got so much freedom that didn’t know what to do with it; while in the recent years, as the opportunities have enhanced with entering the EU, we have gained additional freedoms. Now we have too much of this freedom and some people don’t really know how to use it (Martina, 19).

And then the whole discussion revolves around the difficulty of choosing among various options and the responsibilities it requires, and how this difficulty might be the reason for some young people to be “afraid of the freedom of choice they get” and to be scared of “how to live” (Giddens, 1991).

Georgian youngsters further specify the meaning of “overdoing” freedom as a result of not being sure how to deal with it: “Do you know what the most problematic issue is? That the concept of ‘freedom’ is so wrongly perceived! It seems that the western cultural trends bring more freedom to Georgian youth; however the meaning of freedom itself is distorted” (Goga, 21); “Despite the fact that they want to be free, they don’t understand what this freedom means... The line between freedom and unrestraint is erased” (Salome, 20). Inquiring about the reasons of such “distortion” or “unrestraint” one receives quite similar responses as well: “You know our mentality: we ‘grasp’ everything excessively and always fall into extremes” (Tiko, 19). This excessiveness is considered to be quite dangerous as, in the Georgian respondents’ words, it is reflected in all the aspects of social life and may be harmful to Georgian youngsters’

morality. The very same concern is expressed by Romanian and Polish youth, who perceive “exaggeration of freedom” as a moral issue as well.

Thus, the liberation dilemma sensibly summarized by Z. Bauman seems quite appropriate in our context: “Is liberation a blessing, or a curse? A curse disguised as blessing, or a blessing feared as curse?” (Bauman, 2000, p. 18).

On the Local Way of Doing Things

Getting familiar with all those ambiguities related to the youth perceptions of the impact of Westernization/Europeanization on the local traditions, religious beliefs, family relations, migration issues, youth characteristics such as their activity-passivity, and finally, their vision of freedom, it is crucial to find out their coping strategies or the ways of dealing with these ambiguities. It seems their coping strategy is quite ambivalent as well, implying a dual attempt to “both embrace and eschew Westernization”, which is presumably their means of preserving “cultural intimacy” (Herzfeld, 2005) alongside emphasizing their international integration.

On the one hand, there seems to be an attempt to copy a lot from the West, especially, from the EU, whose standards and norms the presented three countries try to follow, while on the other hand, there is an obvious attempt to do things in the local way, which predominantly implies a kind of bricolage - a mixture of the local with the Western. The youth discourses evolve along the same line: On the one hand, they complain about imitating the West and copy-pasting everything Western, while on the other hand, they stress their own ways of combining the elements from different contexts, making the point that although not all the examples of bricolage can be considered as successful, they still represent their attempts to do things their own (local) way and to keep or invent “specificity”.

As noted above, the young people are concerned about the lack of bricolage in their societies. According to the Romanian youngsters’ narratives, they “try to look at all the possible examples of those Western countries and to copy them, starting from the first names as lots of Italian, French, etc. names have been imported, especially as a result of this huge wave of migration, and ending with the arts” (Irina, 24). The common perception that everything Western is considered to be “of a better quality, more modern and civilized” is assessed by my respondents as a local “mistake”. Consequently, they call for a “selective incorporation” of all

the outside elements: "Recently we have been taking everything from everywhere, especially from the West, and now it's time to select them, to keep only good things, not everything. It's a Romanian mistake to try to adopt everything" (from a focus group discussion with the BA students of political science at Bucharest University). Some of them state that even the Eastern trends become fashionable among the locals only after the West approves them and they become popular there. For instance, Lelia (18) is confident that "Romanians still look a lot at the West and even the popularity of Chinese food can be considered as the Western influence as Chinese food is quite popular in the West and therefore, it has become popular here as well." Lelia concludes with a sad smile that "we should respect ourselves more".

Polish young people talk about the same type of Polish "mistake" though they might not use this very term: "After the communist era we believed that Poland is an extremely traditional country and our thinking is based on old, outdated ideas, while everything that is Western and can be called European is better and more enlightened! This is a generalization, which makes things really bad here" (Igor, 20). This dichotomy of the old-fashioned/outdated vs. the modern/civilized can be traced in almost all the youngsters' narratives. Georgian respondents also express the concern about their peers' attempts to look "modern" or "cool" that is "Westernized," which may range from the copy-paste of the latest Western fashion that makes everyone look "distinctively similar" (Tsuladze, 2011, p. 70) to the copy-paste of popular music represented by Georgian pop, which is "a tasteless imitation of the Western pop" (Sandro, 17) (*ibid.*, p. 72).

The young people passionately criticize such local "mistakes", whether the latter are Romanian, Polish or Georgian, and suggest various strategies of dealing with this issue, some of which are quite successful, others quite complicated or even strange.

The first and most common strategy emphasized by the youth from all three countries is "rediscovering" the local: "Maybe now a popular trend is to rediscover our own. You know, now all of us are into bio stuff and lots of women I know are rediscovering their mothers' or grandmothers' recipes... and this is searching into the traditional, I guess" (Maria, 21). Alongside "rediscovering" the local in everyday life, the young people bring a number of examples of such a rediscovery from painting, music, cinematography, etc. For instance, Irina (24), herself an artist, states that in response to copying the Western, a few years ago young Romanian artists

started copying the local. She brings an example of the Cluj School of painting, which is characterized by a specific style and distinctive features such as the emphasis on social issues, expressionism, the domination of black and white colors, etc., and can be immediately identified as a Romanian style. She thinks that young Romanian artists tend to imitate the Cluj School as "the whole Western style of painting became not just boring but so common that by going back to the national style one wants to be not unique but, you know, somehow special, not common".

Andrei (25), a film director, talks about the same strategies in cinematography noting that Romanian films have very specific and quite outstanding style easily recognizable as Romanian with its realistic and naturalistic emphasis, long talks, rather shaky camera, less care for technical aspects and more care for how feelings are transmitted, etc. He argues that Romanians can benefit a lot from the Western support but then they can always do things their own way, even if it does not imply only successful cases: "I think we are in a good position, where we try to take money from the EU and it's not by chance I am saying this first! We don't take good examples, we just take money mainly and at the same time, we keep our way of doing things, and this comes with good and bad examples. Even though we are European, we are still very, very much Romanian!"

Alongside rediscovering the local, there is also a trend of creatively mixing the local with the Western. It seems the Western cultural trends encourage improvisation and result in a culture-specific bricolage reflected in the modernized representations of the local. My respondents bring a lot of examples of such a bricolage from various areas of social life, including fashion, food, architecture, painting, music, etc. According to my Georgian respondent Irakli (21), a DJ at one of the popular music clubs: "I may use the western cover to decorate my Georgian sketch but it always remains Georgian and I am extremely proud of it!" Some young people even state that combining the Georgian with the Western has its historical roots and that the Georgian-European bricolage, exemplified by "Shin", "Zumba", "Assa-Party" and other Georgian performers today, has started in the 19th century, and that "Georgian academic music itself is a product of the combination of European music with Georgian folk" (Luka, 21).

Romanian and Polish respondents recall similar examples stating that their cultural traditions, say, traditional music, can be a powerful means of stressing the local and resisting the Western, especially the Western musical styles dominating the musical scene in the world. One of the most often cited examples among Polish youth is the group "Zacopower",

which presents Polish folk songs and music in a modernized way that is “combining it with the best elements of modern Western music”; while Romanian youngsters often mention the group “Fara Zahar” (“Without Sugar”), which “adapts the Western-style music to the local reality and uses lots of irony and sarcasm to present social aspects of Romanian life”.

That’s how “glocalization” works: by adopting Western cultural elements and combining them with the local ones, especially the folk ones⁴ in a culture-specific way so that on their side “reworked traditional themes provide the basis for innovative and adaptive responses to outside influences” (Blum, 2007, p. 27). Though there is one danger the young people envision talking about the bricolage: They express their concern that even the most successful examples of bricolage are often assessed by the locals through the Western lenses, that is they are accepted and become popular among the locals only after they have become popular in the West. As one of my respondents remarked: “I guess we have a number of good examples of remaking things in our own way though in general we are not very creative... I believe we adapt certain things but I don’t think we recognize them. I think we take songs and change words in Romanian – that’s not creativity but that’s the only phenomenon we recognize. There are many other phenomena that go unnoticed” (from a focus group discussion with the MA students of sociology at the University of Cluj-Napoca). According to the young people’s narratives, the “recognizable” cases of bricolage are measured by their “respect in the West” though they are afraid that most of such cases are “very commercial and they all seem so similar, like one and the same” (Lucian, 20). Thus, another dichotomy appears in this context – the local heterogeneity vs. the Western homogeneity, and the former as a means of resisting the latter.

Besides those cases of bricolage one can be proud of, the young people recall less successful and even quite strange cases of bricolage. And although some assess them as failures and some perceive them as shameful, they tend to believe that these cases might still represent the strategies of cultural resistance. Georgian youngsters confess that there is a fashionable trend of being intelligent they try to follow, which is more an image than a true aspiration, and they share a number of cases when they spend a whole day at a literary café as if they were getting familiar with the latest fiction though they might stare at the same page all day long, or when they take their own comics to a university library and pretend they are getting familiar with academic material. One of my Georgian respondents commented on this trend:

I have a feeling it's a kind of response to this political project of 'enlightening our youth' though you would ask: why such a distorted response? I would reply: It is fetishism, a mock on our politicians' obsession with promoting these Western-style educational standards, which stays on the surface and doesn't really go deeper. Maybe it's not a very successful attempt but it's a specific way to cope (Giorgi, 19).

The corresponding examples can be traced among Romanian and Polish youth. The often cited case of Romanian bricolage is "Manele" – the "trash pop, which originates from Turkish-Arabic roots and combines all these strange elements from elsewhere, including the local Gipsy music". As the plot of manele is usually about money, women, expensive cars and houses, most of the young people perceive it as shameful though quite often they confess that despite the fact that their peers would commonly refuse that they listen to manele, many of them still do. And although the young people think that manele can be descriptive of the Romanian reality, not in a sense that "Romanians have all these golden things and expensive cars, or they possess the mansions in Spain, but these ideas and respective attempts can be seen in the society", nevertheless they state that "this kind of music rejects the impact of the Western culture in a way" (from a focus group discussion with the BA students of political science at Bucharest University). To cut it short, we can conclude that manele, with its carnival characteristics, might represent the resistance to the Western-style order and rule through its emphasis on the "barbarian" elements and its attempts to reverse the normality (the same way as a carnival reverses an everyday routine). It might have a deliberate shocking effect, consequently, being used as a means of resistance.

Another example of the "shameful" bricolage from a very different sphere of life though still applied as a means of cultural resistance can be found in the Polish reality. My Polish respondents share the following observation: "After the collapse of the communist regime we were desperate to adopt everything Western; then we found out that the actual Western didn't coincide with our ideal of the Western and our expectations were not met. Now, searching for the solution out of this difficulty, we invented a very strange thing - we have combined Soviet and European bureaucracies, which is a dangerous combination but we have tried to find our own way" (from a focus group discussion with the MA students of humanities at Jagiellonian University, Krakow).

Thus, based on the abovementioned discussion, there can be various strategies of cultural resistance, from rediscovering the local, even copying the local, to mixing the local with the Western. Despite the fact that not all the examples of such a bricolage can be considered as successful, it turns out that even the “strange” examples of bricolage can be applied as a means of cultural resistance; the most important thing is that all of them represent the local ways of doing things.

Furthermore, the young people blame their peers for lacking national sentiments encouraging them to be prouder of their national identity. Both Romanian and Polish youth think that they lack the sense of national. They think it is especially visible now, when “a very strong idea of the united Europe has been promoted” and many young people consider their identities as European rather than just Romanian or Polish, which can shadow the feeling of national. As Anita (19) has put it: “I still feel that I am Polish but some people just forget about that and they want to be European; they try to be European and forget about their roots”; or to quote Alina (24): “I think we [Romanians] somehow lose our identity. It is bad for the country. We have to be more nationalistic... I think we should be prouder of our culture, our values. We start to forget about these things and to adopt the Western or, as we say, European ones.” However, there are some respondents, who state that after their country joined the EU, they have become more nationalistic: “After entering the EU I have become more nationalistic than I was before. When you feel that you are a perfect market for the developed countries to sell their products and in addition, they make you believe that it is only you who benefit from them, that before you were not civilized, and that you are a true European now, it’s hard not to become a nationalist” (Andrea, 23). Another respondent sharing the very same concern calls it “European hypocrisy” suggesting everyone to be aware of it “for our own good” (Lucian, 20). And it is noteworthy that although Georgian youth usually consider themselves quite nationalistic, they still state that “the epoch of being pro-Georgian hasn’t started by now” calling their peers for action to “protect our deeply cultural” and to preserve the “national spirit”.

Despite such alarms, the young people seem quite optimistic about the future revealing their ambivalent attitudes once again as the idea of lacking national sentiments and the idea of caring about the national do coexist in their narratives. Therefore, it is not surprising that after hearing their complaints about losing the national identity one can suddenly come across the following statements: “The fact that there are still some

young people, who don't want to leave this country, who want to help this country grow and they want to change things here, shows that we still care about our national" (from a focus group discussion with the BA students of political science at Bucharest University). "Today the Western influences outweigh the Eastern ones; however, the specific Georgian outweighs both. The fact that such concerts as "Art-Gene" are organized, the people from different regions of Georgia gather to perform folk songs, dances, traditional sports, etc. demonstrates that Georgian culture hasn't been lost and still exists among the youth" (Lela, 18). I can boldly say that such statements can be found in the majority of interviews and they sound so similar as if the young people were constantly reproducing the same narrative.

I would like to summarize this chapter with the words of one of my respondents, who along the whole interview was persuading me that her peers and she herself lacked national sentiments and from time to time repeating that sometimes they were ashamed of their national identity. At the end of interview, when I asked her to give me some examples of the local food, moving to the examples of the local folk songs and dances, inquiring about some details of the local holidays, and finally, discussing the issue of regaining the lost territories, she gradually got so passionate that finished her discussion with the following sentence: "And now I realize I am a nationalist. Yes, definitely yes! Da, da!" (Elena, 24).

Conclusion

In the presented paper I have attempted to reveal the construction of ambivalent identities in the new European countries and the margins of Europe. Based on the youth perceptions, I have aimed to illustrate how the Westernization and particularly Europeanization discourses uphold such ambivalent identities promoting the construction of certain reality, in which the young people constantly negotiate between the westernizing forces and the national. I have argued that the attempt "to both embrace and eschew Westernization is a marked ambivalence" among the youth from the presented countries (Georgia, Romania and Poland) and that this dual aspiration coexists within the same narratives by the same young people.

The abovementioned duality is reflected in the youth discourses on the impact of Westernization/Europeanization on the local traditions, family

relations, religious beliefs, migration issues, youth characteristics such as their activity-passivity and their vision of freedom, as well as their coping strategies, which seem quite ambivalent as well, implying both rejecting and accepting Westernization/Europeanization as a means of preserving “cultural intimacy” alongside emphasizing international integration.

The research has revealed that in all the studied cases (Georgia, Romania and Poland) the youth narratives are constructed throughout the ambivalent perceptions of the Western, primarily seen as EU-ropean. The recent Western trends are perceived as, on the one hand, encouraging improvisations and resulting in a culture-specific bricolage reflected in the modernized representations of the local, thus promoting the re-invention of the traditional, while on the other hand, being imposed over and incongruent to the local reality, therefore endangering the traditional. Consequently, the youth responses are also quite ambivalent: on the one hand, attempting to extensively copy from the West, basically symbolized by EU-rope, while on the other hand, doing things the local way, whether it is rediscovering the local, even copying the local, or selectively incorporating the Western, predominantly EU-ropean, into the local.

NOTES

- ¹ The interviews with Georgian youth were conducted in Georgian, while the ones with Romanian and Polish youth were conducted in English.
- ² Just to compare this vision of Romania's location with the one in Encyclopedia Britannica, here is the definition from the latter: Romania is a "country lying in the eastern half of the Balkan Peninsula in southeastern Europe <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/508461/Romania>
- ³ This issue is widely discussed today, when in the conditions of a harsh socioeconomic crisis the survival of the EU itself has become a concern. In his interview to the "Guardian" on 26 January 2012, Umberto Eco pointed out that "European identity is 'shallow'... So whose faces should we print on our banknotes, to remind the world that we are not merely 'shallow' Europeans, but profound? 'Perhaps not politicians or the leaders who have divided us... but men of culture who have united us... [and] there are books we have yet to read that will help us reflect on cultures different from our own. Little by little: that is how our European identity will become more profound'." (http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jan/26/umberto-eco-culture-war-europa?fb_source=hovercard)
- ⁴ "Privileged forms of national identity have been those assumed to be linked with... a 'folk' culture" (Edensor, 2002, p. 141).

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THE VISA DENIAL CASE: CONTEMPORARY ART IN BELARUS, MOLDOVA, AND UKRAINE BETWEEN POLITICAL EMANCIPATION AND INTERNALIZATION OF COLONIAL GAZE

Introduction

The position of the contemporary art from Central and Eastern Europe in the global art world can be metaphorically described through the art work of Sándor Pinczehelyi called “Almost 30 Years 1973-2002” (Hungary).¹ The first part of it was produced in 1973. It represents the self portrait of a young man holding the hammer and the sickle in front of his face. His two hands are strictly crossed in front of his chest and his face is framed by the symbols of communist ideology. Analyzing this work in 1988, Lorand Hegyi came to the conclusion that artist “abolishes the symbol – by means of tautology – as he makes the abstract concept a concrete object ... Tautology completes the process of defetishization: the sickle is nothing else than an ordinary sickle, the hammer is nothing else than an ordinary hammer” (Hegyí 1988).² Meaningless, according to Hegyi, the materiality of those two objects changed its symbolic meaning after the great geo-political transformation of Europe in the 1990s. In the second part of Pinczehelyi’s work, realized in 2002, we can see the artist himself, considerably older, with his hands crossed in the same gesture. Nevertheless, there are no objects in his hands. Now the hammer and the sickle are still present there only as ideologies, denoting that these objects-symbols (or their absence) still hold the capacity to shape the identity of the subject from a particular geographical location. In Eastern Europe his/her everyday condition of living as well as evaluation of his/her activities and even the freedom of movement (between countries) are determined by the socialist history of the region, its contemporary colonial position of the Second World in the global capitalist economy and post-colonial prejudices of the Western external gaze.

During the past twenty years a great number of Western publications, research projects, and exhibitions are concerned with art and identity from Eastern Europe. These include: "East Art Map" by the Slovenian group IRWIN, series of books by Piotr Piotrowski, "spike Art Guide East. A Briefing on Contemporary Art and Culture in Central and Eastern Europe", "Who if not we should at least try to imagine the future of all this?: 7 episodes in (ex)changing Europe"; a number of "Former West" conferences; exhibitions like "Beyond Belief: Contemporary Art from East Central Europe" (Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 1995), "After the Wall: Art and Culture in post-Communist Europe" (Moderna Museet, Stockholm, 1999), "The Art of Eastern Europe in Dialogue with the West. From the 1960s to the Present" (Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 2000), "Gender Check: Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe" (MUMOK, Vienna, 2009), "Promises of the Past: A Discontinuous History of Art in Former Eastern Europe" (Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2010), and, the most remarkable in the context of my research, "Progressive Nostalgia" curated by Viktor Misiano (Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci in Prator, Italy, 2007) and "Ostalgia" curated by Massimiliano Gioni (The New Museum, New York, 2011).

The main aims of these projects can differ: the re-evaluation of the art historical canon; the inclusion of relatively unknown works by artists from the former Eastern bloc into the global art world; the consideration of the fate of the post-socialist space and artistic production within it; or – and this will be the hidden agenda – continuous exoticizing of the Eastern European "Other". Ostalgia trend in the institutionalized contemporary art not just "offers a fascinating look back", as Susan Snodgrass (2011) stated it, but also represents the contemporary Western gaze on Eastern Europe as a unique bearer of socialist tradition, as a space where the remains of great utopias still can be found, mixed together with memories about the brutality of totalitarian regimes and traumas of transitional processes.

This approach creates a problematic position for the artists from the region – in order to work with their own reality, its past and the present, they should keep in mind the possible interpretations along Ostalgia ideological lines that would be insensitive to the particularities of local contexts. Such a warning is even more crucial for artists from post-soviet countries where the possibilities of production of contemporary art are limited due to the underdeveloped institutional system and the constant shortage in exhibition spaces and funding. Participation in international

projects often constitutes the only opportunity to proceed with professional career for Ukrainian, Moldovan or Belarusian artists.

The new geographical division should be considered here. The vast majority of the above-mentioned projects explored art from ex-socialist countries that were integrated to the European Union (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Romania), the countries of former Yugoslavia, and, sometimes, Russia. Historical trajectories and the contemporary context of other post-soviet republics remain to be less known to the international art world while current symbolic division between “West” and “East” moves to the EU border. It is significant that the biggest interest towards art from the post-soviet space comes now from “former East” countries already integrated to the EU. As I was told by Marta Dziewanska, curator in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Warsaw, who is currently preparing a research project about contemporary art in Russia and other post-soviet republics, this interest is based on the recognition of power structures of intellectual and artistic production designed to maintain symbolic hierarchy between European countries. Recent exhibitions dedicated to the art of Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova include “ЯКЩО / ЕСЛИ / IF” curated by Ekaterina Degot (PERMM Museum of Contemporary Art, Russia, 2010), “Opening the Door? Belarusian Art Today” curated by Kęstutis Kuizinas (Center for Contemporary Art, Vilnius, Lithuania, 2010 – 2011), “Journey to the East” curated by Monika Szewczyk (Galeria Arsenal in Białystok, Poland and Mystetskyi Arsenal, Kyiv, Ukraine, 2011), and “Sound of Silence: Art During Dictatorship” curated by Olga Kopenkina (The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, New York, 2012). Most of the above mentioned projects were designed to represent the art of a particular country for a foreign audience. But on the contrary, the “Journey to the East” was aimed to promote empathy, mutual communication and understanding within the region instead of separation and exotization of post-soviet Others:

Perhaps the value of The Journey to the East is not in prescribing new models for interaction based on love rather than of capitalist competition, but in producing a space where in some instances (though not at all levels) these models can be performed, articulated, and made visible. But I believe that this can be recognized only by one who also makes the effort to take part in the chain of perception, interpretation, subjective examination and transformation of the material presented. (Babij, 2011)

The curatorial approach to the "Journey to the East" bears resemblance to Piotr Piotrowsky's idea of "frame", critical attitude towards art that gives possibility to recognize shades of meaning thorough the analysis of a context. By "framing" art in Eastern Europe, Piotrowsky means to take into consideration cultural policy of power authorities, local art traditions and myth, not to mention political, social, gender regimes etc. Discussing the impossibility of understanding Ilya Kabakov's installations without the consideration of a specific soviet type of communal dwelling – "komunalka", Piotrowsky notes: "if we'll succeed to capture the relationship of text/context, we'll understand the true meaning of the work of art that is so different from "Western art idioms" imposed on it" (Piotrowsky 1998). In other words, "framing" is a possibility of creation of autonomous space of reference that will be historically correct and independent from the ideology of effortless borrowing and repetition of "central" intellectual fashions by European "peripheries". This strategy is crucial for the analysis of Eastern European art in the context of its continuous colonization and commercialization by Western contemporary art system.

Going back to the particular context of three countries selected for this study I would like to use another artistic work as a metaphor, which can help understanding contemporary reality of Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine. It is a performance by the Ukrainian activist Alexander Volodarsky. In September 2010 he had himself tattooed with "No Europe for you here" (Figure 1.), a phrase said to him by a Ukrainian investigation officer as a response to his demand for a lawyer (Volodarsky was prosecuted for public protest actions in 2009). "The Not-Europe place" (but also "not Asia" and "not Russia") is a neat new name for countries in Eastern Europe that didn't manage to enter the European Union and played the role of exotic post-soviet neighbors, mostly unknown for the general public in the West. But this "The Not-Europe place" is also a self definition, in which "Europe" represents the ideal of democracy, lawfulness and human rights (however contested by consequences of recent economic crisis), while the reality of the native country is defined by hypocrisy, brutality or instability of political regime and social order.

While artists like Volodarsky literary embody borders (both political and symbolical) and their influence on lives of people, the same challenges of the new geopolitical position are acknowledged by local intellectuals in the context of border studies. The intellectual trend that has been popular for the last twenty years in humanities (history first of all, but also

geography, sociology, political sciences, social and cultural anthropology) was developed on the basis of “frontier theory” by Frederic Jackson Turner. Frontier is a moving and dynamic space between “civilization” and “barbarians” that can play crucial role in the history of some country (USA in Turner’s analysis). Nevertheless, Turner’s approach had been highly criticized for the inherent colonialism; it gave an impetus to the concept of borderland useful in studies of unclear, heterogeneous, hybrid reality of territories that were on the margins of big geopolitical formations. According to Volodymyr Kravchenko, concept of borderland allows to avoid analysis of Ukrainian history from the point of view of binary system East-West (Kravchenko 2011: 56). On the other hand, the borderland discourse with emphasis on multicultural specificity was criticized for the exoticizing of periphery, imagining borderlands and peripheries as bearers of past, traditions and identities that are lost in “centers”.

Tomasz Zarycki puts a question how discourse of borderlands in Central Eastern Europe works for the benefit of intellectuals discovering and praising it, through the celebration of multiculturalism that often does not exist anymore (the neat example of such an approach can be find in the intellectual community connected with the “*І*” magazine in Ukraine; praising the multicultural past of city of Lviv is accompanied by the complete ignorance of current xenophobic tendencies in the region). According to the historian, (intellectual as well as political) elites aim to present themselves as the main agents of change and are not willing to recognize the crucial role of external factors. They constantly reject colonial analysis because it can uncover the vulnerability and the marginality of their own position of dependence on “centers” (Zarycki 2011: 89). The borderland status serves as a compensatory strategy creating an illusion of the unique symbolic capital of a periphery: “it looks like Belarusian art has a chance to play on the aspirations of the West to expand Western cultural horizons. It tends to establish itself as a metaphysical border area, which has the meaning of some additional, but necessary articulation of the modern world order” (Kopenkina 1998). Such an approach is mostly welcomed, as it can be seen in exhibitions about the East listed above. The raising of uniqueness of peripheries can be used in the politics of refusal of responsibility for colonial exploitation, as a strategy of masking power inequalities. Beside these intellectual and curatorial ideological veils, art projects from borderland countries – and Volodarsky’s performance is just one among many other examples – resist colonization, embodying

social problems of the Second World that cannot be consumed as a mere “uniqueness of periphery”.

The power dynamics of center-periphery interdependence posits Eastern Europe not as a separate “Other” reality to the West – its condition is a direct result of the colonial capitalist system of contemporary world. In the art critical discourse, it was recently discussed by Agata Pyzik: “We must be honest with ourselves: socialism was not an isolated Eastern phenomenon. We can find remnants of socialist policies everywhere in Europe, and this is perhaps what makes the subsequent nostalgia universal. ... What we need is a bold look into the present, at how capitalism abuses both East and West” (Pyzik 2011). Artistic works from the region (interpreted through the proper contextualized “frame”) propose a possibility for such a bold look as they are mirroring historical processes at the same time that they are contributing to them.

1. Politics of everyday life. Production of art in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine

After the fall of Soviet Union the whole way of life in the countries of the former socialist bloc was changed. New nation-states have been building their own national projects, political regimes, economic systems and gender orders during the permanent changes of the last twenty years. Spheres so remote from each other (at the first sight) such as art and politics are interconnected on the basis of such a common social context. In post-soviet countries with “spectacle” democracies, hypocrisy of media, outdated educational systems, and ideologically corrupted intellectual discourses (neoliberalism and nationalism should be listed first of all) real politics (as a radical way of naming, analyzing and challenging dominant power structures) can appear in marginalized cultural fields like critical and non-commercial contemporary art.

Similar but at the same time specific cultural and political situation in each of listed countries influence art and provoke performative discussions over crucial social problems that can take resembling visual forms. The authors of “Postmodernism and the Postsocialist Condition: Politicized Art under Late Socialism” (2003) show how the same political symbols (hammer and sickle, red stars, famous images of Lenin, Marx, Mao) were simultaneously juxtaposed with McDonalds or Coca-Cola in art of such

distant countries as Russia, Yugoslavia, Cuba, and China in the second half of the 20th century:

These countries share very similar problems, such as rising unemployment, a crisis of values, a loss of identity, commercialization, nationalistic ideas, and a resurgence of sympathy for the former political system, but they also share something else. At the historical point that marks the beginning of their transition to capitalism, these countries also possessed a similar cultural and ideological legacy. From this legacy there emerged similar kinds of artistic endeavors. These were not limited to the officially imposed and often officially sanctioned Socialist Realism, although they were frequently strongly related to it. During the late socialist period, such endeavors emanated spontaneously, and often with no visible connection. (Erjavec 2003: 3)

There are some thematic motifs frequently addressed by different artists in contemporary art of Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine during the last twenty years: the hypocrisy of politics and media, core symbols of national identity and collective memory, poverty and illegal labor, gender models etc. These motifs can be read as new topoi in the art of the region. Like the topoi of "the Creation Myth" or "the Flood" reappear in the early texts of different civilizations, some specific topics are frequently addressed in the art of countries with similar political and social regimes. The metaphor of "topos" is borrowed from the literary discourse where it was developed by Ernst Robert Curtius ("European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages", 1948) and Joseph Campbell ("The Hero With A Thousand Faces", 1949). Topos means first of all a unifying idea that is a recurrent element in literary or artistic work; in the context of contemporary art I conceptualize topos as a semantic net, which consist of ideas, images, sounds, or other elements linked by association. For example, in "the Visa denial case" topos that will be thoroughly discussed in the last part of this paper I analyze projects that use passports and visas as main visual tools and are dedicated thematically to national identity and citizenship, to the connection between borders and personal freedom in the era of global capitalism and colonial hierarchy between countries.

It should be noted that the main vectors of the upward career mobility between Ukrainian, Belorussian, and Moldavian artists are West (Europe) / East (Russia). Therefore artists from neighboring countries know a little about work of each other; striking similarities in their agendas cannot be read as repetition or borrowing. The detailed analysis of circumstances

of artistic production and its interconnections with political regimes and intellectual discourses in the selected countries is crucial for the understanding of the main topoi in the art of the region. The results of this analysis will constitute the properly contextualized interpretational “frame” for the art works discussed under the topoi classification in the second part of this paper.

1.1. Soros centers for contemporary art in Eastern Europe: liberalization and neoliberalization of cultural production

It is believed that “contemporary art” as a specific type of art production was imported to Eastern Europe in the early 1990s as part of the “normalization” of post-socialist societies, altogether with “free elections” and non-governmental organizations. The main agents for its introduction were centers of contemporary art (CCA) founded by George Soros. These centers formed a new professional art network in Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltics and gave a strong boost to the development of local art scenes. One of the main objectives of the Centers has been “de-indoctrination”, the release of the cultural production from total ideological, political and economic control of socialist state. Their institutional logic was influenced by ideas of Karl Popper, whose book “The Open Society and Its Enemies” gave the name to the Foundation of George Soros. According to the theory of Karl Popper, “impersonal institutions” indirectly influence cultural contexts and they fit much better to the idea of democracy. These centers proposed to replace the previous socialist model of total state support and control with the neoliberal model in which dynamics of artistic production is influenced by commercial market and art institutions that are controlled by the depersonalized figures of collectors, art managers and curators.³

During 1990s Soros centers were the main intermediaries between Western art world and local art scenes, organizing international exhibitions, offering educational possibilities and financial support for artists and curators. Their role is often acknowledged by artists as crucial for the beginning of their international careers. In Ukraine CCA existed in Odessa (1996 – 2000) and Kyiv (1993 – 1999, gradually losing financial support of Soros Foundation till the closure in 2008; its legacy and archives were transmitted to the Foundation Center of Contemporary art). In Moldova CCA functioned from 1996 till 1999 (later its agenda was continued by new organization KSA:K), and in Belarus, Soros Foundation

existed until its banishment by Lukashenko's regime (1993 – 1997). Abundant institutional support allowed artists, which were previously associated with (marginalized) opposition to Socialist Realism, to become well-known and to legitimize their own art strategies through a relevant critical discourse. Another result of the activity of Soros centers was "Soros Realism" – "*soft and subtle* uniformization and standardization of Postmodernist pluralism and multiculturalism as a criterion of enlightened political Liberalism that has to be realized by European societies at the turn of the century" (Šuvaković 2002).

Simultaneously with the activity of Soros centers, overall "perestroika" of cultural field occurred. There were a number of interrelated processes: the collapse of the system of ideological control and state support for arts; the erosion of the principles of Socialist Realism; the discovery of diversity of world art; the search for national roots in art; the rediscovery of forbidden names, events, and historical art styles. Historical ideas of modernism from the beginning of the 20th century received a new life and a false status of the newest tendencies in art. Soros centers were the only ones providing institutional support to art practices experimenting with new media (photo, video, installation, performance). Other experimental initiatives from the early 1990s were closed or switched over to more profitable types of art production (design, salon paintings) in the total absence of public support.

With all that generous encouragement from Soros centers and the developing connections with the global art world and art market, contemporary art (as experimental and intellectual art practice) for a long time remained on a marginal position in the local art context of Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine. In 1995, the Ukrainian artist Alexandr Roitburd commented on this new marginality:

Old artistic nomenclature embraced the yesterday's ideological and aesthetical opponents from the national-modernist side, appropriated its ideology and made it serve the nomenclature's structures. The demand for the optimistic, positive and intelligible art was brought back to life. Everything came back. "Us" and "them" got back, too. Them – cultural establishment and us – the underground, marginal and homeless of the modern culture. ... They appear in public in the glory of legitimate treasurers of the real folk roots, the carriers of spiritual values and space energy. It is much more understandable than our torments of dumbness, tragic energy and brutality, ready-mades and simulacra. We break our foreheads trying to break the stereotypes and give new dynamics to genesis.

They feel easier in the new stagnation regime. They raise the inertia of their thinking to the rank of a national tradition and push it as it stands under the protection of the state ideological violence machine revived by them. (Roitburd 2009)⁴

The new status quo was largely supported by a state whose cultural politics during the 1990s was inert and eclectic, it focused on the preservation of old soviet-style cultural institutions (museums, Artistic Unions etc.) while the art educational system and its academic curriculum was left almost untouched by contemporary theoretical debates (and often with optional courses on art history of the 20th century). Contemporary art gained a suspect status for a significant part of the artistic community as well as for the broad public; even in intellectual circles, conservative aesthetical taste was combined with a consumerist and superficial approach towards art. These processes were common in Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine although various social, political, and economic reasons caused local particularities in the new institutional organization of cultural sphere.

1.2. Ukraine. “Try to find another cow”

Ukraine, as a big country with a relatively liberal political regime, has a dynamic and diversified institutional landscape in the contemporary art field now. However, in the middle of 2000s there was a sluggish stagnation described by Jerzhy Onuch as: “Milk the cow as long as you can. But then do not try to feed the cow, but try to find another cow” (Onuch 2007 : 12). The ex-director of Kyiv CCA used this metaphor to explain the common attitude of artists who used to have full support from some institutions (soviet-style ones or Soros centers) and were not able to run independent initiatives when generous financial sources were absent (it should be noted that an art market was not an option to Ukrainian artists to support themselves until the very recent times).

After the decline of the Soros-funded Center for Contemporary Art in Kyiv in the mid 2000s, the status of the most significant institution in the contemporary art field passed to the PinchukArtCentre (PAC), which opened its luxurious gallery in the center of Kyiv in 2006. PAC is independently financed by the billionaire collector Viktor Pinchuk and serves as a tool to support the public image of its owner on the international scale. It has dominated the public perception of contemporary art in Ukraine due to its

huge financial resources and extensive PR. PAC popularizes spectacular contemporary art with low level of intellectual discussion and promotes a consuming and entertaining attitude towards art among the public. Pinchuk's impressive enterprise created the encouraging background to other private initiatives by the Ukrainian wealthy ("I³" – grant program for arts from Rinat Akhmetov's Foundation for Development of Ukraine, Foundation IZOLYATSIA - cultural project). There are also a few private galleries dedicated to contemporary art, established in 1990s and 2000s in Kyiv: Karas Gallery (1995), Collection Gallery (2006), Ya Gallery (2007), Tsekh Gallery (2005) and others. From various regional initiatives the most well known are Dzyga (Lviv, since 1993), activities of SOSka group and the Municipal Art Gallery in Kharkiv, the Center of Youth Initiatives "Totem" in Kherson.⁵ After a long period of ignorance, the Ukrainian state paid some attention to the contemporary art by establishing in 2010 the state funded Mysteckyi Arsenal. In May 2012 this institution is going to conduct Arsenele – the first Ukrainian biennial of contemporary art. At the beginning of 2010s, a few historical exhibitions dedicated to the art of 1990s and 2000s took place in state museums. Contemporary art is more often addressed in the mass media (nevertheless. the professional level of journalistic comments remains quite low) and there are a few influential art-critical magazines (Korydor, Art Ukraine and others).

This short account about the institutional system of contemporary art in Ukraine can seem reassuring, meantime the artistic community still struggles with a number of problems among which commercialization and low intellectual quality of art are the most crucial. State funded and private institutions give preference to a dozen of well-known authors from the older generation (the so-called "1987 generation") who had secured their careers already and sometimes prefer to reproduce almost decorative works in their own recognizable manner. Younger artists (called "generation 2004" because of the appearance on the art scene simultaneously with mass civic protests known as "Orange revolution")⁶ bring political consciousness and bold social critic to the art discourse. Their radical critical activities are supported by a small number of institutions – Foundation Center for Contemporary Art, Visual Culture Research Center and by artists themselves, through artist-run spaces (SOSka gallery, LabGarage) and communal projects like HudRada – a group of Ukrainian artists, architects, translators and political activists, which acts as a collective curator.⁷

Critical contemporary art is rarely discussed in intellectual circles that are not directly connected to its production. Representatives of other disciplines persistently reduce art to “aesthetic proposition” to protect themselves and society from the potentially dangerous knowledge that the intuitive nature of art may hold (Żmijewski 2011). Examples of such a fear can be found in acts of censorship – closures of exhibitions “Kyiv artistic encounter: New Art from Poland, Ukraine and Russia” at the Ukrainian House (1995), “New History” at the Kharkov Art Museum (2009), and the resent closure of “Ukrainian body” exhibition in the Visual Culture Research Center of National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy by the president of NaUKMA Serhiy Kvit himself (February 2012).

1.3. Belarus. ArtPartisan versus ArtActivist

At the first sight there is no contemporary art scene in Belarus. In the country that is ruled by “the last dictator in Europe” there are no institutional conditions for training a new generation of artists and curators, neither the conditions for their work (in Belarus all institutions of civil society including NGOs and independent media are under strict state surveillance). The situation was reflected by Aleksei Lunev in his work “Nothing here” (Black Market series, 2009), and by Alexander Komarov in “No news from Belarus”, 2010 (Figures 2, 3). Paradoxically enough, these works were introduced at the moment when Belorussian contemporary art achieved certain historical continuity – but rather in a form of smoldering guerrilla warfare than officially recognized history that is represented in museums.

Belarus benefited a little from the activities of Soros Foundation (which was expelled from the country in 1997) and other Western foundations. Institutional history of the contemporary art in independent Belarus is very short: the period of liberalization in 1991 – 1995; the whole generation of artists emigrated abroad at the end of 1990s⁸; closure of the European Humanitarian University in 2004 (the university continued its activities in Lithuania in 2005 serving as a main site of education and communication for Belorussian intellectuals); the performance festival “Novinki” (since 1999); the emergence of the legendary Pozdemka Gallery (2004 – 2009); the opening of the independent center for contemporary art “Ź” gallery in 2009.

There is a significant difference between Belorussian art of the second half of 1990s, the first half of 2000s and late 2000s. It can be grasped

through names of the only two magazines dedicated to contemporary art in Belarus: "pARTizan" (since 2002) and "ArtActivist" (since 2011). Partisan identity of Belorussian art was addressed by different authors as "the essence of the artistic experience of the Belorussian territory, based on the strategy of guerrilla movements" (Kopenkina 1998). Cultural guerrilla was represented in art projects by Ihor Tishyn "Slight partisan movement", "Partisan's gallery" (1990s), Mikhail Gulin's action "Ich bin kein Partisan" (2008), "Movable Partisan's boutique" by Artur Klinov (since 2004). Idea of the artist as partisan was more radically realized in the public demarches of performer Ales Pushkin.

Artur Klinov (who is also the editor of "pARTizan" magazine) explains that Belorussian contemporary art is the community of authors in the total absence of the art scene. In order to survive, the Belorussian artist should become "partisan" by fulfilling different functions such as curator, manager, loader, and seller by him/herself in the country where cultural stagnation is advantageous for the totalitarian state (Klinov 2011). Despite the absence of an open conflict, guerrilla always implies resistance to the oppressive regime and dominant ideology. Contemporary art in Belarus reflects repressed political activity which also has a form of partisan movement (one of the most popular oppositional web-sites is called "Belarus partisan").

The political efficacy of art was highlighted by Sergey Shabohin. The artist decided to start "ArtActivist" internet magazine after brutal police repressions against peaceful demonstrations that followed the presidential election (December 19, 2010). He considers intellectual activity as a form of civil activism: "we inserted our main message into the very name of the project. Belorussian artist today, in our opinion, should not proceed with "guerrilla struggle" but take a proactive stance. We must act" (Artimovich 2011). Younger generation of artists apply "art-activism" for the deconstruction of the ideology of the Belorussian state (Marina Naprushkina) and for direct actions in public space (art group "Lipovy tsvet").

Public "art-activism" is physically dangerous in contemporary Belarus (Ales Pushkin was arrested a few times for his performances; members of "Lipovy tsvet" art group are hiding from the police). Making critical art in Belarus demands personal courage and civil selflessness unparalleled in the Western art world; radical art gestures cannot be commercialized due to the absence of the institutional art system. There is a significant intersection between oppositional intellectual circles ("New Europe"

magazine, "Gender route" project) and contemporary art milieu as well as artists and intellectuals who share the same problems in the absence of public scene, civil society and democracy. They are trying to invent new non-partisan strategies; nevertheless guerrilla tactics will still be relevant in the coming years (Shabohin 2011).

1.4. Moldova. Art in the Kiosk

There is the specific topos in the contemporary art of the Republic of Moldova that is not repeated in art of other countries. Works by Iurie Cibotaru "Shepherds on the Moon" (2000), "Moldovan cosmonaut" by Igor Shcherbina (2003), and the curatorial proposal by Stefan Rusu "UFO convention" reflect the fact that Moldovan variant of contemporary art still hasn't been recognized inside the country. Artists ironically compare art with a paranormal phenomenon that remains alien to Moldovan context and continues to exist for some mysterious reasons.

The artistic community went through a heterogeneous process of transformation altogether with Moldovan society. After the first innovative impulses in the late 1980s there have been a period marked by the activation of a new generation of visual artists. Innovative processes in art were promoted by the Soros Center for Contemporary Art established in Chisinau in 1996. CCA supported many local and international projects and influenced spreading of new media art (video art, video installation, performance) previously non-existent in Moldova (Esanu 1998). As the only institution for contemporary art in 1990s, CCA couldn't compensate for the lack of art critics, theorists and art historians. The absence of proper critical discourse resulted in the questionable quality of art: "to be finally able to experiment on all levels, initially seemed more important for Moldovan artists than to gather information and knowledge on a theoretical level... in the everyday art scene the opinion asserted itself that creative processes were an "unconscious synthesis"... that in reality was nothing more than unconscious imitation of Western art" (Dragneva 2004: 125).

Limited institutional support resulted in the "natural selection" that decreased the number of Moldovan artist working with the experimental and critical art to a dozen figures. Today there are just two institutions promoting contemporary art: KSA:K – an institution that succeeded the Soros CCA, and the Moldova Young Artists Association Oberliht (both initiated at the beginning of 2000s). The last is supporting the "Art hotel" exhibition space, the "Postbox" magazine and the Chiosc project. Chiosc

(Romanian word for “kiosk”) is a functional replica of a socialist apartment situated in a square in the historic center of the city of Chisinau. It is exposed to the public as a platform for presentations and cultural events. There are no commercial galleries dealing with contemporary art, and the state has been showing complete ignorance towards it for the past twenty years.

In the absence of exhibiting possibilities (KSA:K doesn't have its own space and “Art hotel” works occasionally), Moldovan artists developed some surviving strategies, including orientation towards performance and research based art in public spaces, mutual support and promotion. Cooperation with Western art institution and exhibiting abroad are the main possibilities for the professional development of artists, that is why the liberal rhetoric of cultural management dominates artistic discourse. It is slightly counterbalanced by the narrative of “Rezistența” web forum connected with political left-wing groups (Esanu 2011). Art activism in Moldova takes shape of informational, educational and communicational initiatives like Oberlist mailing list by Association Oberliht or Artploshadka project founded by the artist Tatiana Fiodorova.

2. “The Visa denial case” and other topoi in contemporary art in Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine

The above mentioned similarities and differences in political regimes and cultural production could be tracked down through the analysis of art works. My research was concentrated on the “political and socio-critical art” in the understanding of Martha Rosler (2010), or, as it was recently described by Ukrainian artist Nikita Kadan: “critical art” as “a testimony on today's social reality and its traumas” (Lanko 2012). On the basis of content and discourse analysis of the contemporary art field in the region,⁹ I identified main topoi that address similar thematic motives and use resembling means of expression. Further in this paper I will briefly overview “the Politician” and “the Checkered bag” topoi, discussing only the most significant projects within each topos. I will concentrate more on “the Visa denial case” topos as the most relevant to the problematic of art in the post-socialist and post-colonial context discussed in the first part of this text¹⁰.

2.1. "The Politician"

"The Politician" topos reflects public politics in selected countries. After the fall of Soviet Union power processes are perceived here as a sphere alienated from influence of ordinary citizens. That is why there are much more projects depicting famous politicians then projects addressing public participation in politics or mass struggle.

In the recent history of Ukraine, the year 2004 represents the symbolic turn in the political and social development of the former soviet republic. The event known as "the Orange revolution" was a moment of spontaneous expression of popular will against mass falsifications during the presidential election. Extensive use of mass-media and political branding turned heroes and anti-heroes of the Orange revolution into pop-stars whose faces could be reproduced on souvenirs. Reflecting this trend Aleksander Roytburd ironically depicted Victor Yuschenko (ex-president of Ukraine) and Yulia Tymoshenko (ex-prime minister) in a few paintings. In his "Tango" series (2005 – 2006, Figure 4) Yuschenko and Tymoshenko are dancing in different romantic settings. Highlighting the isolation of dancers from their surroundings, the artist presents the separation between reality and politics in Ukraine and the stage character of Ukrainian democracy.¹¹

Belorussian artist Marina Naprushkina in the "Office for Anti-Propaganda" (since 2007) depicts the only one figure in the politics of her native country – Alexander Lukashenko, the President. In the installation at the "Opening the Door? Belorussian Art Today" exhibition in Vilnius (2010, Figure 5), the artist showed the result of years of work on the collection and archiving of the original material of state propaganda. Her project discovers an outstanding example of how a modern dictatorship is maintained.

In the art of Moldova there are no contemporary politicians depicted by artists. Instead, some heroes from the Soviet pantheon are addressed frequently. In a performance and film by Stefan Rusu "Cold mind, clean hands & hot heart" (2000) the famous slogan by Felix Dzerzhinsky (the chef of NKVD in 1920s) is literary realized. In the video of the same author "Brezhnev likes Mamaliga & Mamaliga Likes Brezhnev" (2001), that is the reinterpretation of Joseph Beuys' performance "I like America & America likes me", the artist performs cooking of mamaliga by the old recipe of Brezhnev's cook. Leonid Brezhnev (addressed also in Veaceslav Druta's video "Portrait of L.I. Brezhnev", 2002) was the Party First Secretary in the Soviet Republic of Moldova in the early 1950s, before becoming the

General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1964. The popularity of the Soviet history can be explained by the crucial role that Soviet politics played in the creation of the Republic of Moldova as a separate state unit. Consequences of that policy still define the identity of the country.

2.2. “The Checkered bag”

Under “the Checkered bag” topos I place art projects that use checkered bags or other objects addressing trade and commerce in their visual structure. Thematically they are dedicated to the processes of economic and symbolic exchange in society and between countries.

In “Mamaliga” action by Ghenadie Popescu (2008, Moldova) artist carried a model of traditional Moldovan polenta weighing 150 kilos from Chisinau to Iasi¹². He was dressed in a costume made from the material of checkered bags. A big shopping bag with specific pattern is a well known object in post-soviet countries. It is used in shopping trips but also by villagers who are bringing products from their households to sell on markets in big cities. By using this recognizable material, Popescu accepted the identity of a small trader, which is the identity of an economic marginal in a marginalized region.

The same material was used in a few projects by Ukrainian artists Sergiy Petlyuk and Oleksiy Khoroshko. In “10 meters” (2009, Warsaw; 2010, Kyiv) they created an artificial corridor with walls covered by checkered fabric. The entrance was decorated with the Emblem of the European Union. At its end, the corridor was more narrow and the passage became less comfortable. The artists explain that a checkered bag is not only an attribute of a particular social group; for them it is also a symbol of relationship between Ukraine and its European neighbors. The progressing narrowness of the artificial corridor reflects the unequal and repressive character of this relationship.

In the “Barter” video by Kharkiv, the artists from the based art collective SOSka exchange reproductions of art works (including some of the contemporary art market’s best-selling authors) for vegetables in a small village in eastern Ukraine. Artists address a huge distance between contemporary art as a complicated intellectual practice and the general public in Ukraine. In this bartering video the value (the price) of art works diminished in the context of basic needs and hard labor of villagers. These issues were addressed a bit differently by Artur Klinov in his project

“Movable Partisan’s boutique” (since 2004). Commenting on the “partisan” identity of Belorussian citizen in general and the Belorussian artist in particular, Klinov created a fake shop where the whole variety of trashy goods from post-soviet space could be bought. These projects can obtain different meanings depending on the context of their presentation – in Western art institution they can be read as a play with stereotypes about the post-soviet East; presented in Belarus or Ukraine they raise questions about the nature and value of contemporary art itself.

2.3. “The Visa denial case”

In “the Visa denial case” topos I analyze projects that use passports and visas as main visual objects and are dedicated thematically to national identity and citizenship, to the connection between borders and personal freedom in the era of global capitalism and colonial hierarchy between countries. Majority of projects discussed below are based on the personal experience of artists. These are stories about unrealized journeys, tiresome hours of waiting at embassies, humiliating interviews, and visa refusals – everyday bodily experiences that marks one’s national origin and position of that geographical location in the First-Second-Third world system.

The very necessity to apply for a visa and to prove trustworthiness is conceptualized by artists as traumatizing experience. Alevtina Kakhidze’s documentation of her persistent attempt to obtain a visa to visit a friend in Australia entitled “Invitation to Australia, or The Museum of One History” (2002) was organized as a museum of the refusal. The story is told through all letters and documents directed to the Embassy, and answers. The artist was asked to prove her intention to go back to Ukraine – and her marriage status, education at the Academy of art, and her patriotism appeared to be not reliable enough. By telling this story in the public space Kakhidze made visible the Glass Curtain that replaced the Iron Curtain in Eastern Europe – opened to financial capital but locked for ordinary people.

Problematic political context of Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova make contextualized reading of the work of art necessarily, as well as “the veiled criticality of art under repressive regimes, generally manifesting as allegory or symbolism, needs no explanation for those who share that repression, but audiences outside that policed universe will need a study guide” (Rosler 2010). The recent political history has such a guide needed for the reading of Aleksander Komarov’s art book “35 gr” (2005). Komarov tells a typical story for the whole generation of Belorussian artists who were

obliged to work abroad and finally to emigrate when political climate in Belarus became too oppressive. During 1990s Komarov's passport collected enormous amount of visas, reflecting the recent history of the region. The book has epigraph on the first page "All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others". Others pages are copies of Komarov's original passport with explanation about history of passport as a document, visas types, costs and procedures, including exit visas necessary to go out from Belarus and the notion of "propiska" – an official address documented in a passport. It is not just about (complicated) travels to the West – it is also a story about the establishment of dictatorship in Belarus. In the accompanying essay Nelly Bekus discusses her own experience: "that was how I came to understand that visas are not merely formal stamps in a passport: they are a special field of human life, and exert a powerful influence over it. They are elaborate obstacle course that separates the desire (or need) to go somewhere from possibility (or the right, if you like) to do so" (Bekus 2005: 45). Discussing the new condition of citizens in the "border zone" who became suspicious to authorities on the both sides of a border exactly because they wish to abandon their "place". Komarov and Bekus made a statement that "place has now become a necessary additional indicator of one's economic and political status. The country on one's passport cover, its image, and its international geopolitical status now determine the extent of an individual's freedom, the human right to travel, and the number of visas in their passport" (Bekus 2005: 46). Another type of emigration was addressed by Antanina Slabodchikava ("9 month, 22 days", 2011, Figure 6). The artist presented her own passport surrounded by plastic flowers in funeral style. Slabodchikava got her passport during "golden times" (the short period of liberalization in Belarus in 1991 – 1995) that's why it had national emblem with hunting pursuit on it. When Lukashenko came to power in 1994 this emblem had been prohibited and slightly modified, the soviet emblem had been introduced as a symbol of the new authoritarian regime. Visual organization of Slabodchikava work resembles the children's game "secrets", in which some nice objects (flowers, fruits, beads etc.) are temporarily buried in glass boxes for the sake of pleasure of rediscovering them. The work tells personal story of loss and "inner emigration", in which freedom exist only as unrealistic dream. Hunting pursuit functions here as a symbol of hidden expectations that keep guerrilla warfare in Belarus cultural and political life still alive. While one national emblem is the symbol of a lost dream about democracy, another one can represent almost unlimited freedom,

at least freedom to travel. Pavel Braila highlighted it in his performance “Welcome to EU” (Moldova, 2009),¹³ in which he proposed to paint the ring with 12 stars (the emblem of the European Union) on real passports of everyone who wanted to participate.

A visa refusal is a moment in the personal history when “big political issues” intrude one’s private life and force one to analyze own position without any illusions. After the series of visa denials when he couldn’t attend his own exhibitions in Germany, the Ukrainian artist Mykola Ridnyi came to the German Embassy in Kyiv and lied down on a pavement showing the vain hope to get a permission to enter to the EU (“Lie down and wait”, 2006, Figure 7). Artist was arrested by the Embassy security service. For the Ukrainian critic this action was a demonstration of “helplessness in the face of the existing system of prohibitions and restrictions aimed against Ukrainian citizens for the sake of political and economic well-being of Europe” (Krivencova 2008). The same action got different interpretation from the Western point of view: “act of laying down in a public path, and his subsequent arrest, interrogation and threats of forced hard labor highlight the stale taste of brute power that has remained all these years after the Soviet pullout” (Foumberg 2008). The very core of the action – existing colonial relations between countries was ignored for the sake of the imagined remains of exoticized socialist brutality.

Tatiana Fiodorova showed almost the inseparable bonding between the artist and her country in the action “I go or I want to London or Are you afraid of me?”,¹⁴ which had been performed after she was denied a visa by British Embassy (and, as well as Ridnyi, couldn’t attend her own exhibition). Fiodorova painted her body in black and had a walk in Chisinau stressing symbolic “blackness” of her own country as a country of illegal workers, black market and trafficking. She used typical checkered bag to paint the EU emblem with a ring of golden stars on it. Later she carried this bag marking her Eastern European identity to Brussels, Paris, Krakow, Bucharest, and Amsterdam (Figure 8, 9). She described her approach as “sometimes I feel like a slave. For me, these bags are a symbol of post-Soviet space, a symbol of transition, mobility, while on the other hand a symbolic wall between East and West, the barriers, the frontiers, the borders that refused my effort to get to London” (Pintilie 2011). By painting her body, Fiodorova also accepted the marginal position of African emigrants inside her own country (she experienced discriminative attitude from her fellow citizens while being black) however she did not acknowledge this in texts and interviews about her performance. That

is the limit of making art based on personal experience and traumas – problematic position of the own context is discussed by artists along the lines of colonial dependency from the West, while discrimination and xenophobia inside their own countries are not addressed.

The most recent projects¹⁵ connected with visas and citizenship were realized in 2011 in Belarus by the group “Lipovyi tsvet” (“Lime blossom”, but also “Fake color” due to the play of words). Radical actionists direct their protest against conformism of Belorussian society. In the “Orgy of vandalism” video, the protagonist performs pseudo-intellectual talk on the dirty kitchen and afterward engages into the series of brutal and vulgar manipulation through the naked body compared with documentary shots from some public holiday in Belarus. In the middle of the absurdist video, the protagonist burns his passport as a waste and even objects in a hopeless attempt to fight civic inertia. For the Belorussian art critic this is “a statement about a pain made by a person in the condition of absolute suffocation ... “Lipovyi tsvet” appeared in spite of Belorussian society, as a protest against the majority, which now shapes “the Belorussian reality” (Artimovich 2012). In the “Buzz in the bus №23” (public action, video) artist addressed his fellow citizens in a bus and accused them in the felonious civic passivity that had made Lukashenko’s regime possible: “I’m a citizen. And you? What does it mean for you to be citizens?”. Artists themselves explain that they formulate urgent questions, but not conclusions (Kolesnikov 2012). The importance of these questions for the local context is confirmed by the uneasiness of those who are supposed to answer, and by police prosecutions directed against the group.

Conclusions

Contemporary art in Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine exist within heterogeneous process of power relations inside and outside the native countries. It reflects the main problems of everyday life in continuous “attempts to break automatic attitude in thinking about social reality” (Piotrowsky 2007: 212). The interrelation between cultural production and politics in local contexts causes the level of criticality of art, the main issues addressed by artists, the character of theoretical discussion with intellectual circles that are not directly engaged in art production, and ways of communication with the general public.

"The Politician", "the Checkered bag", and "the Visa denial case" topoi discussed above reflect political and economical relationships within the countries but also their geopolitical position in the post-socialist and post-colonial context of Eastern Europe. Further research on local topoi should discover art projects addressing national food and/or historical personages and dedicated thematically to national identity; bodily topics in art and the feminist critique of gender regimes; and a more updated topos of political activism.

The critical potential of contemporary art remains ambivalent. "Art activism" (that can gain forms of civic heroism in the context of an authoritarian regime) destroys social anemia and passivity and counteract the preservation of conservative nationalistic discourses. Contemporary art creates challenges to the social "status quo" and contributes to the political emancipation of knowledge production in the region. On the other hand, in the absence (or shortage) of local exhibiting possibilities and public funds, the contemporary art in Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine is vulnerable to the pressure of ideological trends and colonial presuppositions of the global art market that readily accepts limited social critique based on personal experiences and traumas of exotic "Others".

FIGURES



Figure 1. Alexander Volodarsky. "No Europe for you here", 2010.



Figure 2. Aleksei Lunev. "Nothing here", 2009.



Figure 3. Alexander Komarov. "No news from Belarus", 2010.



Figure 4. Aleksander Roytburd. "Tango", 2005.



Figure 5. Marina Naprushkina. "Office for Anti-Propaganda", 2010.



Figure 6. Antanina Slabodchikava. "9 month, 22 days", 2011.



Figure 7. Mykola Ridnyi. "Lie down and wait", 2006.



Figure 8. Tatiana Fiodorova. "I go or I want to London or Are you afraid of me?", 2010.

NOTES

- 1 The art work can be seen on <http://overcomings.blogspot.com/2007/11/exhibition-sndor-pinczehelyi.html>
- 2 Quoted by *Postmodernism and the Postsocialist Condition: Politicized Art under Late Socialism*. – p. 32.
- 3 The history of CCA in Eastern Europe is analyzed in details by ESANU O. (2008) and KADAN N. (2009, b).
- 4 The text had been originally written by Roitburd in 1995. It preserved its actuality till recent times and was republished in 2009.
- 5 Detailed description of current art institutions in Ukraine can be found in BABIJ L. (2009).
- 6 I analyzed generational shift in Ukrainian contemporary art in ZLOBINA T. (2010, a).
- 7 Detailed description of activities of HudRada can be found in KADAN N. (2009, a).
- 8 Belarusian art emigrants were filmed in the documental movie by Ehor Surski “Art-repatriation: Belarusian German Artists”, ZHYVKOVA T. (2012).
- 9 I conducted a field research in Belarus during two research trips (March 2010, September 2011) and in Moldova (October 2010, May 2011), including: visiting of exhibitions, discussions, presentations; content analysis of main art magazines; content analysis of archives and libraries in KSA:K (Moldova), “Ÿ” gallery (Belarus), Foundation Center of Contemporary art (Ukraine); expert interviews with Vladimir Us (artist, editor of Postbox magazine, curator of CHIOSK project, Association Oberlist, Moldova), Stefan Rusu and Lilia Dragneva (artists, curators at KSA:K, Moldova), Sergei Shabohin (artist, editor of ArtActivist magazine, Belarus), Valentina Kiselova (curator of “Ÿ” gallery, Belarus). I didn’t make expert interviews with Ukrainian artists and curators due to my long-term experience of participant observation on Ukrainian contemporary art since 2005.
- 10 Other topoi in the critical art of the region were left behind this paper due to its size limits.
- 11 I conducted detailed analysis of “the Politician” topos in Ukrainian contemporary art in ZLOBINA T. (2010, b).
- 12 The art work can be seen on <http://ghenadiepopescu.wordpress.com/2009/08/27/69/>
- 13 The art work can be seen on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7eoFEOGqD4>
- 14 The art work can be seen on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jCC6nXMjUMY>
- 15 The art works can be seen on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cRp62ERPGds>; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gRSqD0Y43Hs&feature=related>

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