New Europe College Yearbook
Pontica Magna Program
2018-2019

Editor: Irina Vainovski-Mihai

Pontica Magna Fellowship Program is supported by VolkswagenStiftung, Germany.

ISSN 1584-0298

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THE SMES DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS IN TRANSITIONAL AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: GEORGIA & ROMANIA

Abstract

Georgia has been the world frontrunner in terms of economic reforms. Its economy experienced a double digit growth before the 2008 crisis and it has been the receiver of a record high volume of the foreign direct investments. However, the small and medium size enterprises of Georgia are among the most inefficient in the world, which prevents the inclusive development of a narrow market thus creating the risks of a spiralling downturn.

Romania too has been among the fastest growing European Union economies. Despite the impressive growth of the national income, Romania experiences severe uneven growth across its regions.

The existing surveys of the small and medium enterprises do not give an answer to such "abnormalities"; however, they give an impression that the current failure is created due to the "transitional process" of the economies of both countries, among other reasons.

The aim of this paper is to research the event in detail through the qualitative methodology, to be able to identify very specific reasons for this deviation and develop a theory based on the empirical findings which would explain or contradict the "transitional" phenomena. Also, to identify the specific drivers – the categories behind the "transitional" process that have strong negative influence over the developments of small and medium size enterprises.

The research used unstructured as well as semi-structured interviewing instruments to identify the positive and negative impact factors. The findings suggest the "transitional" process from the socialist bloc countries to the market economies has strongly negative input in the enterprises development; however the findings also suggest that the relative underdevelopment during the "socialist governance" does not play an important role; it is rather its economic structure prohibiting individual entrepreneurship that is the most negative muddling force. In addition, the in-depth interviews suggest that in both countries the "socialist past" has been an additional disruptive layer to the already existing social-economical texture, thus its sole role might be exaggerated. It also suggests the governments were passive in correcting the "distortion" and the correction

or transition process was left on its own, however heavily contributed to by other economic partners. The findings fully support a holistic approach theory. Based on the findings it is possible to conclude that the pro-active "holistic involvement" approach is the only viable solution to improve the development speed of the small and medium enterprises in Georgia and Romania.

Keywords: SMEs, Small and Medium Enterprises, Transitional Economies, Georgia, Romania

1. Acknowledgment

This research was supported by New Europe College - Institute for Advanced Study, Bucharest as part of its Pontica Magna Fellowship Program sponsored by the Volkswagen Stiftung. I would like to thank my colleagues from New Europe College, Bucharest, Vasile Goldiș Western University, Arad, and Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Iași who provided insight and expertise that assisted the research and paper.

I would like to thank Constantin Ardeleanu, PhD; Liviu-George Maha, PhD; and Florin Dumiter, PhD for their assistance with arranging the interviews that greatly contributed to this paper.

I would also like to express my gratitude to all respondents in Romania and Georgia for taking their time and sharing their views during the interview process. I am also immensely grateful to the New Europe College staff for their daily diligent assistance which made the working process easy and enjoyable.

2. Introduction

"Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurship are essential drivers of economic and social well-being. Representing 99 percent of all businesses, generating about 60 percent of employment and totalling between 50 percent and 60 percent of value added in the OECD[1] area, SMEs are key for delivering sustainable and inclusive economic growth. They are instrumental to ensure that our economies and societies adapt to major transformations, such as digitalisation, globalisation, ageing and environmental pressures": stated by OECD.

While structurally the world economies and especially the OECD and non-OECD member countries differ from each other, the small and

medium enterprises still play a major role in all of them, particularly in developing countries where they are crucial for human, social and economic developments. According to the World Bank[2], "Formal SMEs contribute up to 60 percent of total employment and up to 40 percent of national income (GDP) in emerging economies. These numbers are significantly higher when informal SMEs are included". And the role of the SMEs is on the rise together with the increasing world population. The World Bank estimated that "600 million jobs will be needed in the next 15 years to absorb the growing global workforce".

Georgia has made substantial progress in transitioning to an open market economy over the past decade. Georgia is a front runner in the region in overall Doing Business Rankings[3] and through improving its business environment, physical infrastructure, and financial and private sector reforms. It has positioned itself well to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the Association Agreement reached with the European Union, in June 2014, which includes a DCFTA.[4] But to successfully do so, certain remaining legacies need to be overcome.

Georgia's reform legacy has been accompanied generally by a relatively stable growth, but unemployment and low productivity remain persistent. Growth has been supported through the continued implementation of large infrastructure projects, as well as tourism, construction and services. Despite the sustained economic growth and successes in transforming its economy, Georgia has chronically suffered from high unemployment, 22 percent in urban areas, and low levels of productivity compared to its peers. Achievement of inclusive growth has proven to be evasive.

The small and medium enterprises remain extremely inefficient in Georgia. According to the OECD SME Policy Index Eastern Partner Countries 2016,[5] "despite strong economic growth in recent years, the SME sector accounted for only 20 percent of value added and 18.3 percent of total turnover in 2013, while the portion of total employment accounted for by SMEs actually decreased between 2010 and 2013".

The reforms initiated within the framework of the EU accession triggered the increase in productivity and the integration of Romania into the EU economic space. GDP per capita rose from 30 percent of the EU average in 1995 to 59 percent in 2016. Nowadays, more than 70 percent of the country's exports go to the EU, and their added value is increasing. Yet Romania remains one of the poorest members of the European Union. It hosts the largest pool of poor people and the widening disparity in economic development and poverty is still observable.

In 2017, Romania's total domestic product amounted to USD 11,000 per capita (current US dollar rate), while in Georgia it was 4 thousand US dollars, which means that the Georgian economy should be almost three times higher to catch up with the level of Romanian revenue. Considering the purchasing power parity (PPP), the total share of the Romanian economy is up to 27 thousand dollars, and 11 000 dollars, or 2.5 times less than the Georgian one (The World Bank Data, 2019).

While in 1990 the shares of GDP per capita of both countries were equal, at about USD 1,600 (current US dollars), after a 5-year fall in 1995, the GDP per capita of Romanians returned to the USD 1,600, in a same period it has fallen in Georgia to USD 600. What it took five years in Romania, lasted in Georgia until 2005, it took 15 years instead of 5.

Bucharest, the Capital city of Romania, is the richest part of the country. With two million inhabitants, the metropolis enjoys a gross domestic product per capita of EUR 22,000 (2017), more than twice bigger than the national average of EUR 9,600. By this indicator Bucharest has exceeded the EU average income per capita, and many secondary cities are following it, for example Cluj-Napoca and Timișoara. However, access to public services remains restricted for many citizens, particularly in rural areas, and there is a large infrastructure gap.

Eurostat[6] reported that

> Nord-Est (Moldavia), the poorest area in Romania and EU's fifth poorest region, is only 39 percent of EU average in terms of development in 2017, compared with 144 percent for the Bucharest region, 67 percent for the Vest / Banat region (including the rich Timișoara-Arad area), 60 percent for the Central region (southern Transylvania), 56 percent for the Nord-Vest (northern Transylvania), 53 percent for the South-East region (including the rich port of Constanța), 50 percent for South-Muntenia and 45 percent for the South-West-Oltenia region.

Similarly, the small and medium-sized enterprises of Romania are experiencing development problems. The EU SBA 2018 Fact Sheet[7] apprised that

> SMEs account for slightly more than half of the added value and for almost two thirds of employment in Romania's total 'non-financial business economy', posting figures of 51.3 percent and 65.8 percent, respectively. This is lower than the respective EU averages of 56.8 percent and 66.4 percent. The main SME sectors in Romania are wholesale and retail trade

and manufacturing, together contributing to almost half of the overall SME added value and to more than half of the SME employment.

In both countries, Georgia and Romania, the small and medium enterprises are underdeveloped compared to their peers. In Georgia the SMEs are experiencing "abnormal" underdevelopment compared to the economic profile of progressive countries. In Romania the regional economic disparities are preserved and their trajectory is widening.

There is ample research on the small and medium enterprises of Georgia and Romania. Flagship reviews among them are the Small and Medium Businesses Act (SBA) related reviews: the SBA review and the SME Policy Index. These reviews, together with other scholarly and non-scholarly research, are primarily based on the quantitative methodologies data obtained through questionnaires from a limited pool of companies and the relevant statistical agencies. These papers and the SBA reviews give an excellent picture of the shortcomings of the SMEs development, but they do not cover the drivers behind the events.

This paper tries to answer the following question: "what are the most important positive and negative factors influencing the SMEs development in Georgia and Romania?" and prove or dismiss the widely accepted perception that "transitional" economies are specifically vulnerable because of their transition from socialism to market economies. At the same time, the research aims to identify the specific categories behind the "transitional" factor itself.

The findings of the present research will help industry professionals, academic researchers, policymakers and multi-national organizations' specialists to better design the policy response sets, in order to eliminate the development problems faced by the Georgian and Romanian entrepreneurs.

3. Background Review: SMEs Definition

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are relatively small companies. There is no unified definition of the SMEs, however there is a unified notion of the SMEs – enterprises less in size than large companies. The SMEs are defined in several ways through quantitative and qualitative approaches.

The predominant definition of the SMEs is based on the quantitative approach considering their turnover and the number of people they

employ. Because in any given country S (small), M (medium), and L (large) correspond to the absolute figures based on the size of its economy, it is simply impossible to define a fair average of the absolute threshold measurements, which complicates the universal approach.

Some of the multilateral organizations still use the universal methodology; however, the actual usage of such measurements is limited to the simplified thresholds for the specific cross-country comparisons and program purposes. For instance, the OECD uses the most common definition based on the size of the companies measured by the number of employees.

Because of the lack of a universal definition and the setbacks associated with some definitions used by the international organizations, most of the time the national SMEs definitions are used worldwide, including for cross-country analyses. However, even at the national level the SMEs might be defined in various ways depending on the purpose: statistics, taxes, accounting, state programs, etc. Country-specific definitions are mixed. Largely, they are based on the quantitative methodology, but in many cases the qualitative conditionality is applied.

For empirical purposes this paper uses the definitions of the SMEs approved by the relevant country's state statistical agencies, unless otherwise mentioned.

Policy makers, businessmen, scholars and journalists widely use the qualitative approach when talking about SMEs. Many do not consider the actual quantitative thresholds behind the articles and other thousands of materials published every year about the Small and Medium Enterprises. The self-identification of businessmen about their belonging to large or small and medium size enterprises is based on the mixed categories; the driver is still size and a general notion of "being smaller than large company"; however, several qualitative categorization apply, for example the ownership structure, the role of the owner, etc.

The so-called "Bolton Report 1971"[8] is the ground-breaking reference for the qualitative definition of SMEs for all successive literature in the field. Later, in 2004, the UNIDO,[9] summarized the previous qualitative approaches.

The quantitative definition of the SMEs by size (turnover/number of employed workers) is a more common method of SMEs description, however many countries include other factors, e.g. legal structure of the companies. When SMEs are compared at an international level the workforce-size defined comparison is assumed to be more relevant. This

assumption is based on the fact that employment is more universal for certain type of non-financial businesses despite their turnover.

a) Romania

As a member of the European Union (EU), Romania's SME statistics are in-line with the European SME definition which is mandatory for all member states. The EU member state statistics are done by Eurostat, and this paper also uses its data on the EU member states including Romania.

The first European common SME definition was established in 1996, because of the need to target support towards the enterprises affected by market failures. The current definition is in force since 2005. It is an important tool for the EU to collect data and produce statistics; it helps specialists to recommend the precise measures of SME assistance to the politicians.

The definition outlines three different ceilings corresponding to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, where the enterprises must neither exceed the staff headcount ceiling nor the turnover ceiling or, as an alternative, the balance sheet ceiling. Even though 99 percent of all European businesses fall under the staff headcount ceiling, the other criteria are equally important and need to be assessed based on each specific case.

These ceilings apply to the figures for individual firms only. A firm that is part of a larger group may also need to include staff headcount/ turnover/balance sheet data from that group.

Table 1. European Union (Romania) SMEs definition

Company category	Staff headcount	Turnover	or	Balance sheet total
Medium-sized	< 250	≤ € 50 m		≤ € 43 m
Small	< 50	≤ € 10 m		≤ € 10 m
Micro	< 10	≤ € 2 m		≤ € 2 m

Source: European Commission webpage, last updated, 2019.

b) Georgia

The definition of the SMEs in Georgia has been changing over the past years due to the developing economy, and the statistics processing harmonization process with the European Union, therefore the Georgian SME definition is still in a transitional period which complicates the time series data analysis.

Like in other countries, Georgia operates with the several definitions of SMEs based on their purpose. The latest and most up-to-date is the one defined in the "Law of Georgia on Accounting, Reporting and Audit". For empirical reasons, the Geostat[10] used definition is commonly accepted by others too. This paper uses Geostat's data.

Table 2. Georgia, SMEs definition according to the Law on Accounting, Reporting and Audit (the amounts are given in GEL[11])

Enterprise category	Employees Number	Turnover m, GEL	Total assets m, GEL
First category enterprise (Large)	>250	>100	>50
Second category enterprise (Medium)	50-250	20-100	From 10 to 50
Third category enterprise (Small)	From 10 to 49	From 2 to 20	From 1 to 10
Fourth category enterprise (Micro)	0-9	0-2	0-1

Source: Geostat, 2019.

Table 3. Georgia, SMEs definition according to the acting Geostat methodology

Enterprise size	Employees Number	Turnover m, GEL
Large	>100	1,5
Medium	20 - 100	0,5 – 1,5
Small	<20	<0,5
Micro	1	<0,03

Source: Geostat, 2019.

After the signing the DCFTA, the Geostat developed another methodology which is harmonized with the EU and the reports based on the new methodology are now available.

Table 4. Georgia, SMEs definition according to the new Geostat methodology

Enterprise size	Employees Number	Turnover m, GEL
Large	>250	> 60
Medium	<250	≤ 60
Small	< 50	≤ 12
Micro	<10	≤ 2

Source: Geostat, 2019

The new methodology (Table 4.) is based on the Purchasing Power Parity principle and it uses the International Comparison Program 2015. According to it, the PPP conversion factor for Georgian Lari/USD equals 0,89; for the Euro area, the PPP coefficient (EUR/USD) is 0,767. Therefore:

The OECD in its appraisal of the Georgian SMEs sector (SME Policy Index) is using the "acting methodology" (Table 3.), while under the PPP based "new methodology" (Table 4.).

4. Reviews Framework

4.1. Major reviews

The SMEs sector are studied and surveyed with some frequency in both Romania and Georgia. Because of their role in the economy, hardly any economic research can take place without having a look on the SMEs. However, the SMEs oriented holistic studies are not many and there is only one which covers both countries, is systematized and takes the review process periodically. It is called the SBA review.

On June 2008, the European Commission adopted a communiqué titled "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Review of the 'Small Business Act' for Europe". Its aim

was to provide an SME policy framework to improve competitiveness and promote entrepreneurship. Rather than being a legislative Act, it contains provisions applying to small firms, directed at governments and institutions to "think small first" when establishing policy and law. Its principles are: 1. Create an environment in which entrepreneurs and family businesses can thrive and entrepreneurship is rewarded; 2. Ensure that honest entrepreneurs who have faced bankruptcy quickly get a second chance; 3. Design rules according to the "think small first" principle; 4. Make public administration responsive to SMEs; 5. Adapt public policy tools to SME needs; 6. Facilitate SME access to finance and develop a legal framework and business environment supportive of timely payments in commercial transactions; 7. Help SMEs to benefit more from the opportunities offered by the Single Market; 8. Promote the upgrading of skills and all forms of innovation; 9. Enable SMEs to turn environmental challenges into opportunities; 10. Encourage and support SMEs to benefit from growth markets.

The SBA review, published in February 2011, is a major landmark in tracking the implementation of the small business act. SBA review measures the performance of EU members and associated countries in relation to the SBA. In order to harmonize the EU policy approaches within the Eastern European neighbourhood and other developing countries, the EC partnered with the OECD.

The SME Policy Index has been jointly developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the European Commission, the European Training Foundation (ETF) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) as a benchmarking tool for emerging economies to monitor and evaluate progress in SME development policies. The SME Policy Index is structured around the ten principles of the Small Business Act for Europe.

Romania is measured under the SBA review and Georgia under the SME Policy index.

4.2. Romanian and Georgian SME sector reviews

In Romania, the SMEs account for 99.6 percent of all enterprises, while the same figure in Georgia is 95.3 percent based on the "acting methodology" and 99.7 based on the "new methodology". The SMEs turnover is 59.1 of the total turnover in Romania, while in Georgia it is 17.5 based on the "acting methodology" and 56.7 according to the "new

methodology". The Romanian SMEs employ 65.5 of the total workforce engaged with the enterprises, while in Georgia this indicator amounts to 43.1 percent based on the "acting methodology" and 68.3 percent on the "new methodology" (Eurostat, Geostat, 2015 Data).

The OECD in its appraisal of the Georgian SMEs sector is using the "acting methodology" (Table 3.), while under the PPP-based "new methodology" (Table 4.), the SMEs performance looks better and closer to Romanian; however, this result is achieved through the increased threshold which captured additional 3 921 companies thus increasing the overall pool of SMEs to 90 110. Despite this minor increment, the output increased from 20 percent to 57 percent and employment from 43 percent to 68 percent. Therefore, it is still valid to assign the previous OECD judgment to the vast amount of the Georgian SMEs.

Table 5. Number of enterprises, turnover and persons employed and the share of SMEs, 2015

	Enterprises		Turnover, EUR, m		Employees	
	total	<250 persons employed %	total	<250 persons employed %	total	<250 persons employed %
EU-28	23,500,341	99.8	27,309,775	55.8	137,444,935	66.3
Belgium	602,153	99.9	989,197	65	2,769,085	69.3
Bulgaria	326,219	99.8	121,308	69.9	1,911,916	74.8
Czechia	1,001,048	99.8	444,231	56.9	3,591,896	67.6
Denmark	210,726	99.7	479,464	59.3	1,666,048	64.3
Germany	2,408,352	99.5	6,061,400	47.5	28,258,410	62.9
Estonia	68,124	99.7	50,820	77.5	414,763	78.2
Ireland	243,433	-	595,095	-	1,308,019	-
Greece	789,975	-	236,153	-	2,162,572	-
Spain	2,465,540	99.9	1,789,292	62.2	11,109,702	72.8
France	2,908,814	99.9	3,624,869	55.3	14,645,799	61.4
Croatia	146,637	99.7	77,670	60.9	989,598	69.5
Italy	3,683,127	99.9	2,887,615	68.8	14,225,278	78.7
Cyprus	48,329	99.9	25,573	79.9	215,716	83.9

	Enterprises		Turnover, EUR, m		Employees	
	total	<250 persons employed %	total	<250 persons employed %	total	<250 persons employed %
Latvia	109,642	99.8	51,304	77.8	633,450	79.4
Lithuania	186,468	99.8	73,997	68.5	934,440	75.9
Luxembourg	31,926	99.5	151,365	70	255,869	68.3
Hungary	536,610	99.8	277,690	57.1	2,596,236	69.8
Malta	26,059	99.8	18,665	85.1	134,212	79.7
Netherlands	1,092,243	99.9	1,412,433	61.8	5,461,082	65.7
Austria	322,325	99.7	653,111	-	2,742,655	-
Poland	1,606,559	99.8	921,350	56	8,652,063	68.3
Portugal	807,183	99.9	314,227		3,007,264	-
Romania	458,122	99.6	263,366	59.1	3,898,199	65.5
Slovenia	134,727	99.8	83,628	68.3	591,340	73.7
Slovakia	429,524	99.9	180,476	56.7	1,502,912	71.8
Finland	229,096	99.7	365,782	56.1	1,454,614	65.6
Sweden	686,433	99.9	811,397	-	3,102,080	-
United Kingdom	1,940,947	99.7	4,348,297	47	19,209,717	53.5
Norway	293,403	99.8	546,504	-	1,610,874	68
Switzerland	142,775	99.2	1,929,684	-	2,737,720	67.1
Georgia (act)*	86,179	95.3	3,833***	17.5	270,196	43.1
Georgia (PPP)**	90,149	99.7	12,428***	56.7	428,153	68.3
*Acting methodology						
**PPP-new methodology						
***GEL/EUR=2.60 (2015)						

Source: Eurostat and Geostat 2015 data, last updated 2019.

The SME Policy Index (Georgia) and SBA Review (Romania) measure the SMEs performance against the SBA principles as they related to the review pillars. Below is the matrix to show both review findings.

Table 6. SME Policy Index scores and SBA reviews

	SME Policy (Georgia) & SBA review (Romania) pillars	GE	EaP[12]
1	**Create an environment in which entrepreneurs and family businesses can thrive and entrepreneurship is rewarded**		
Georgia	Entrepreneurial learning and women's entrepreneurship	2.7	2.52
Romania	Romania performs above the EU average in entrepreneurship — sustaining the substantial achievement it has achieved over the years. In particular, the share of adults who intend to start a business within 3 years was the highest in the EU, exponentially growing from 6.3 % in 2009 to 29.01 % in 2015. However, the country scores particularly low for the share of high-growth enterprises, posting the second worst score of all EU countries.		
2	**Ensure that honest entrepreneurs who have faced bankruptcy quickly get a second chance**		
Georgia	Bankruptcy and second chance for SMEs	2.94	2.71
Romania	'Second chance' refers to ensuring that honest entrepreneurs who have gone bankrupt get a second chance quickly. Romania continues to score in line with the EU average on this principle.		
3	**Design rules according to the "think small first" principle**		
Georgia	Regulatory framework for SME policy making	3.48	2.95

Romania	Progress in this area has practically stalled during the past 3 years. This stagnation followed an encouraging spurt of reforms starting in 2014, such as the Law for SMEs, approval of the methodology for the `SME test´ and the establishment of a consultative body to assess economic impacts of legislative initiatives on SMEs. However, the 'SME test' is still not used systematically by the public authorities, nor has it been accompanied by an implementation strategy. At the same time, the 'one-in, one-out' principle, which establishes that the introduction of new administrative burdens for SMEs must take place simultaneously with the elimination of existing ones, has not yet been fully put into practice. Nor has the 'only-once' principle been put into practice, as companies are still asked to provide the same information to different authorities.		
4	**Make public administration responsive to SMEs**		
Georgia	Operational environment for SMEs	4.33	4.01
Romania	'Responsive administration' refers to public administration being responsive to the needs of SMEs. In this area, Romania performs in line with the EU average. Although little progress was identified since last year, Romania has made significant progress since 2008 for certain indicators. For instance, the cost of starting a business fell from EUR 112.5 in 2008 to EUR 26 in 2017 and the time to pay taxes fell from 230 hours in 2011 to 163 in 2018. Progress has also been made on the time required to transfer property, which improved from 21 days in 2017 to 16 days in 2018. However, important indicators on the cost of enforcing contracts, on fast-changing legislation, on the complexity of administrative procedures and on the burden of government regulations all remain well below the EU average.		
5	**Adapt public policy tools to SME needs**		
Georgia - 5a	Support services for SMEs and start-ups	3.69	3.13

Georgia - 5b	Public procurement	4.04	3.12
Romania	Romania's performance on state aid & public procurement is below the EU average. On the one side, Romania has one of the lowest average delays in payments from public authorities in the EU. On the other, the share of businesses participating in public tenders is the country's weakest indicator, falling from 30 % in 2013 to 15 % in 2017. Further factors affecting the proper functioning of Romania's public procurement system, such as administrative capacity, transparency, fraud and corruption, are also referred to in the 2018 European Semester country-specific recommendations.		
6	**Facilitate SME access to finance and develop a legal framework and business environment supportive of timely payments in commercial transactions**		
Georgia	Access to finance for SMEs	3.76	3.28
Romania	While Romania's overall performance on access to finance was previously in line with the EU average in 2017, the overall performance is now below the EU average. Overall, the picture is mixed. In contrast with a strong performance on the legal rights index (measuring the degree to which collateral and bankruptcy laws protect the rights of borrowers and lenders), Romania scores poorly on alternative funding, including business angel funding, where it is among the worst performers in the EU, venture capital and equity financing. The overall drop from last year's score is due to strong declines in traditional funding. Respondents to the Survey on the Access to Finance of Enterprises (SAFE) pointed to a deterioration from 201640 to 201741 in: (i) the willingness of banks to provide a loan from 9 % to 9.9 %; (ii) access to public financial support from 8.6 % to 11 %; and (iii) rejected loan applications and unacceptable loan offers, with the percentage of rejections and unacceptable offers rising from 6.4 % to 18.4 %.		

7	**Help SMEs to benefit more from the opportunities offered by the Single Market**		
Georgia	Standards and technical regulations	4.22	3.76
Romania	Romania performs below the EU average for the single market and continues to have one of the lowest scores in this area compared to other EU countries. Romania has the lowest share of SMEs with intra-EU online exports. In addition, the country performs poorly in terms of the timely transposition of the Single Market Directives. However, Romania has intensified its efforts in this area within the last year, reducing the average transposition delay for overdue directives from 11.7 to 9.1 months, which is now broadly in line with the EU average.		
8	**Promote the upgrading of skills and all forms of innovation**		
Georgia - 8a	Enterprise skills	3	2.66
Georgia - 8b	Innovation	2.7	2.57
Romania	Romania's performance in skills & innovation remained poor and below the EU average, posting the lowest score in the EU. All indicators were below the EU average and in many of them Romania was among the worst-performing EU countries. Moreover, overall performance has stagnated since 2008. However, given that the other EU countries improved their performance even faster, Romania's distance to the EU average has increased.		
9	**Enable SMEs to turn environmental changes into opportunities**		
Georgia	SMEs in a green economy	2.48	1.99
Romania	Romania's performance under the 'environment' principle is below the EU average, despite significant recent progress from 2015 to 2017.		
10	**Encourage and support SMEs to benefit from growth markets**		

Georgia	Internationalisation of SMEs	3.6	2.79
Romania	On internationalisation, Romania performs in line with the EU average. The biggest challenge consists in improving trade performance, beyond the EU, not only in traditional exports of goods, but even more so in online exports. In extra-EU indicators, Romania scores among the worst-performing EU countries and has shown only very slow growth since 2008. In contrast, the country has some of the highest scores of all EU countries for the group of trade facilitation indicators, namely information availability, advance rulings and procedural formalities. The one indicator for which Romania is performing poorly is the involvement of the trade community.		

Romania has two apparent shortcomings in innovations and regulatory framework, while Georgia performs better than the EaP average in all pillars. A few pillars close to average are: innovation, Entrepreneurial learning and women's entrepreneurship and Bankruptcy and second chance for SMEs. No critical failures have been assigned to any country by any survey including the SBA related one.

5. Methodology

This part of our paper is based on the qualitative research as a principal methodological tool; however, it uses a mix of methodologies.

Three focus groups have been created based on geographic allocation: Group A for Georgia and Groups B and C for Romania. Each group consisted of up to 15 institutions. The participants were the business support organizations (BSOs), including the chambers of commerce, business associations, institute-based business research organizations, local municipality units responsible for the business development, etc. 13 respondents answered the questions from each country.

For Groups B and C, two locations were identified: Arad-Timișoara counties of Romania, because of their high economic development level, and Iași county because of its districts being one of the least prosperous. Bucharest was excluded because of "administration" leverage. And

other relatively better developed cities (e.g. Cluj-Napoca) were excluded due to their geographic location. Apart from having different per capita income, Iași and Timișoara counties are both located at the borders, but at completely different economic frontiers: EU and non-EU, also they share the status of being unofficial capitals of Banat and Moldavia respectively.

Two different qualitative research tools have been used. Tool 1. – semi structured interview for Group A and Tool 2. – unstructured interview for Groups B and C. The semi structured interview was chosen due to the means of interview – the e-mail. The main argument for choosing the semi-structured interview was the inability of continuous questioning by e-mail. For Groups B and C, unstructured face-to-face interviewing was carried out.

In both cases the participants were provided detailed information about the research in which they were asked to participate and measures were taken to ensure that they fully understood what their participation would entail, including any possible exposure.

For un-structured interviews, only one open-ended question was used - "what are the factors influencing the SMEs in the region, positively as well as negatively". For semi-structured interviews the same discourse was used, with a few securing sub-questions to make sure all possible aspects would be covered by the respondents.

The language for the unstructured interviews was English, however, with less than half of the respondents the interview process was run in Romanian, with the assistance of an English translator. For semi-structured interviews, the Georgian language was used.

All interviews were run from April to May 2019.

The reason for choosing the qualitative methodology was to ground-up the theory through in-depth interviews with professionals familiar with the research subject. Another reason for choosing the qualitative methodology was the fact that the existing research on the Georgian and Romanian SMEs is based on the quantitative research, using data collected from SEMs via questionnaires. And the quantitative analysis does not explain the abnormal development. Therefore, the interview process could not have been a proving exercise of the given theories; rather it was assumed as the data generator to develop the theories behind already measured results.

The data coding process took several steps. During step one, the data driven larger-text categories were developed. The second step included the assigning of the short categories based on the text instead of imposing them. Such categories were identified based on the frequency and relevance

of the descriptions used during the interviews. Under the third step, the "high-level" categories were developed through the absorption process while keeping them emerging from the text too. During the forth step, the categories were systematized under the dimensions and the connections in-between them were established and prioritized.

In total, 23 categories were identified: territorial location, transport infrastructure, cross-border connectivity, state trade policy, institutions, cultural context, education, skills, youth engagement, affordable workforce, government, judiciary, state interference, regulations, internal political turbulences, business environment, legislation (tax & procurement), red-tape, corruption, nepotism, investments, access to finance and others.

The categories were grouped in three blocks: (i) access to markets: territorial location, transport infrastructure, cross-border connectivity, state trade policy; (ii) access to skills: cultural context, education, skills, youth engagement, affordable workforce; (iii) access to public services: government, judiciary, state interference, regulations, internal political turbulences, business environment, legislation (tax & procurement), red-tape, corruption, nepotism; (iv) access to finance: access to finance; three categories were left out of the category blocks: institutions, investments and other.

The "access to markets" block refers to the actual access to primarily cross-border trade possibilities; however, it does not exclude the access to the local market either. The categories under these blocks were used in the following senses:

Table 7. Categories

Block	Category	Explanation
access to markets	territorial location	actual location of the business which benefits or prohibits its market access
	transport infrastructure	the means of transport that benefit or prohibit the business access to the markets
	cross-border connectivity	the general connectivity assuming the location, infrastructure, cultural, and racial connectivity and any other type of connectivity benefiting or prohibiting the business access to the markets except for the cases when two above categories are specifically involved
	state trade policy	trade policy which can benefit or prohibit business access to some specific markets abroad
access to skills	cultural context	set of historical events that are perceived as contributing to the formation of the current skills or abilities to better perform entrepreneurial activities, but not related to business only
	education	education at large which benefits or prohibits the acquiring of business-making skills
	skills	skills that enable or disable business making
	youth engagement,	youth engagement or disengagement, or youth motivation or demotivation which influences the generational ability to obtain the necessary business-making skills
	affordable workforce	existence of skilful workforce which is also affordable

Block	Category	Explanation
access to public services	government	general perception about a government in terms of efficiency
	judiciary	general perception about the judiciary in terms of efficiency
	state interference	extreme inefficiency of the government when government negatively interferes into the businesses
	regulations	enabling or disabling role of regulations
	internal political turbulences	internal political process which influences the business environment negatively or positively
	business environment	government services that influence business operations on the ground daily
	legislation (tax & procurement)	enabling or disabling effect of legislation with accent on fiscal and public procurement legislations
	red tape	government bureaucracy in terms of efficiency
	corruption	government bribery
	nepotism	businesses need to rely on the connections within the government to operate
access to finances	access to finance	affordability of different types of finances

Block	Category	Explanation
non assigned	institutions	series of historical events or developments those turn into institutionalized behaviour that impacts access to skills and access to finances
	investments	foreign investments that do not involve financing only, but rather include knowledge transfer (access to skills) and foreign networking (access to markets)
	other	other categories, those with low frequency; however, they were not absorbed

6. Empirical results

6.1. Data findings

6.1.1. General data

In total the identified categories were used 269 times in a negative context vs. their use in a positive context – 172.

In Georgia, the negative use reached 137, while the positive amounted to 23. In Romania: negative – 132, positive – 149. While in Iași: negative – 81, positive – 47 and in Arad-Timișoara: negative – 51, positive – 102.

In terms of frequency, top categories were identified in the following order: 1 - cultural context (86), 2 – skills (62), 3 - transport infrastructure (48), 4 – territorial location (35), 5 – education (31), 6 – government (30), 7 – cross-border connectivity (24), 8 – investments (24), 9 – institutions (22), 10 – access to finance (19), 11 - Internal political turbulences (16), 12 – red tape (13), 13 – affordable workforce (12), 14 – legislation (12), 15 – business environment (11), 16 – youth engagement (11), 17 – corruption (10), 18 – state trade policy (9), 19 – state interference (9), 20 – regulations (7), 21 – nepotism (6), 22 – judiciary (5).

Table 8. Categories frequency

	Territorial location	Transport infrastructure	Cross-border connectivity	State trade policy	Institutions	Cultural context	Education	Skills	Youth engagement	Affordable workforce	Government	Judiciary	State interference	Regulations	Internal political turbulences	Business environment	Legislation (tax & proc)	Red tape	Corruption	Nepotism	Investments	Access to finance	Other
All	35	48	24	9	22	86	31	62	11	12	30	5	9	7	16	11	12	13	10	6	24	19	35
Georgia	9	11	5	9	2	24	11	20	0	2	14	5	9	7	5	7	6	4	1	0	1	6	17
Romania	26	37	19	0	20	62	20	42	11	10	16	0	0	0	11	4	6	9	9	6	23	13	18
Iași	13	25	10	0	5	20	9	16	5	10	8	0	0	0	11	1	3	6	6	6	2	8	8
Arad-Timiș	13	12	9	0	15	42	11	26	6	0	8	0	0	0	0	3	3	3	3	0	21	5	10

Two categories were identified as having a frequency of more than 10 percent: cultural context (16 percent) and skills (10), both from the Access to Skills Block. For Georgia, the leading categories are: cultural context (frequency - 24) and skills (20); for Romania: cultural context (62), skills (42) and transport infrastructure (37); for Iași: transport infrastructure (25) and cultural context (20); for Arad-Timișoara: cultural context (42), skills (26) and investments (21).

Therefore, the category blocks were defined as following, in order of importance: access to skills (202), access to markets (116) and access to finances (19). While same categories for Georgia sequenced in the following order by importance: access to skills (57), access to markets (34) and access to finances (6); Romania: access to skills (145), access to markets (82) and access to finances (13); Iași: access to skills (60), access to markets (48) and access to finances (8); Arad – Timișoara: access to skills (85), access to markets (34) and access to finances (5).

The categories were grouped under the timeline as well, referring to their occurrence in time: (i) before 1990, (ii) 1990 – 2019 and (iii) 2019 -. Most of the occurrences are related to the current times 1990-2019 (317) followed by historical, before 1990 (89), and possible future occurrences, after 2019 (11). In Georgia, the time distribution is the following: 7, 146, 1; in Romania 82, 171, 10; in Iași: 19, 103, 5; in Arad-Timișoara 63, 68, 5.

The categories were then assigned to the 10 principles of the SBA.

Table 9. Categories distribution across the SBA 10 principles

	Entrepreneurship	Second chance	Think small	Administration	State aid & proc	A to Finance	Single market	Skills & Innov.	Environment	Internationalization
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
All	78	1	28	93	16	54	72	131	1	68
Georgia	13	0	9	45	4	6	20	35	1	30
Romania	65	1	19	48	12	48	52	96	0	38
Iași	41	0	11	38	8	7	24	29	0	24
Arad-Timiș	24	1	8	10	4	41	28	67	0	14

The SBA principles corresponding to the maximum number of categories are in the following order: 1 – skills and innovations (131), 2 – administration (93), 3 - entrepreneurship (78), 4 – single market (72), 5 – internationalization (68), 6 – access to finance (54), 7 – think small (28), 8 – state aid and procurement (16), 9 – second chance (1), 10 - environment (1).

6.1.2. Positively related data

In total, the categories were used 171 times in a positive context.

In Georgia, the positive use reached 23; in Romania – 149. While in Iași – 47 and in Arad-Timișoara – 102.

In terms of frequency, 19 categories were identified in the following order: 1 - cultural context (37), 2 – skills (25), 3 – investments (20), 4 – education (17), 5 – territorial location (16), 6 – institutions (15), 7 – affordable workforce (12), 8 - transport infrastructure (10), 9 – cross-border connectivity (9), 10 – access to finance (6), 11 – regulations (4), 12 – business environment (4), 13 – legislation (4), 14 – corruption (4), 15 – state trade policy (3), 16 - Internal political turbulences (3), 17 – red tape (2), 18 – youth engagement (1), 19 – government (1).

Table 10. Categories frequency: positive

	Territorial location	Transport infrastructure	Cross-border connectivity	State trade policy	Institutions	Cultural context	Education	Skills	Youth engagement	Affordable workforce	Government	Judiciary	State interference	Regulations	Internal political turb.	Business environment	Legislation (tax & proc.)	Red tape	Corruption	Nepotism	Investments	Access to finance	Other
All	16	10	9	3	15	37	17	25	1	12	1	0	0	4	3	4	4	2	4	0	20	6	15
Georgia	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	4	0	4	3	0	1	0	0	1	4
Romania	15	10	9	0	15	37	17	25	1	10	1	0	0	0	3	0	1	2	3	0	20	5	11
Iași	2	3	0	0	1	1	9	11	1	10	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	2	3	0	1	1	7
Arad-Timiș	13	7	9	0	14	36	8	14	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	19	4	4

Two categories were identified as having a frequency of more than 10 percent: cultural context (18 percent) and skills (12), both from the Access to Skills block. For Georgia, the leading categories are: regulations (frequency - 4) and business environments (4); for Romania: cultural context (37), skills (25) and investments (20); for Iași: skills (11) and affordable workforce (10); for Arad-Timișoara: cultural context (36).

Therefore, the category blocks were defined as following, in order of importance: access to skills (92), access to markets (38) and access to finances (6). While same categories for Georgia sequenced in the following order by importance: access to markets (4), access to skills (2) and access to finances (1); Romania: access to skills (90), access to markets (34) and access to finances (5); Iași: access to skills (32), access to markets (5) and access to finances (1); Arad – Timișoara: access to skills (58), access to markets (29) and access to finances (4).

The categories were grouped under the timeline as well, referring to their occurrence in time: (i) before 1990, (ii) 1990 – 2019 and (iii) 2019 -. Most of the occurrences are related to the current times 1990-2019 (106) followed by historical, before 1990 (62), and possible future occurrence, after 2019 (8). In Georgia, the time distribution is the following: 0, 21, 0; in Romania 62, 85, 8; in Iași: 5, 39, 4; in Arad-Timișoara: 57, 46, 4.

The categories were then assigned to the 10 principles of the SBA.

Table 11. Categories distribution across the SBA 10 principles

	Entrepreneurship	Second chance	Think small	Administration	State aid & proc	A to Finance	Single market	Skills & Innov.	Environment	Internationalization
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
All	14	0	4	17	1	38	26	70	0	16
Georgia	1	0	3	9	0	0	3	1	0	4
Romania	13	0	1	8	1	38	23	69	0	12
Iași	4	0	1	5	1	2	2	23	0	3
Arad-Timiș	9	0	0	3	0	36	21	46	0	9

The SBA principles corresponding to the maximum number of categories are in the following order: 1 – skills and innovations (70), 2 – access to finance (38), 3 – single market (26), 4 – administration (17), 5 – internationalization (16), 6 - entrepreneurship (14), 7 – think small (4), 8 – state aid and procurement (1), 9 – second chance (0), 10 - environment (0).

6.1.3. Negatively related data

In total, the categories were used 269 times in a negative context.

In Georgia, the negative use reached 137. In Romania – 132. While in Iași – 81 and in Arad-Timișoara – 51.

In terms of frequency, 22 categories were identified in the following order: 1 - cultural context (48), 2 – skills (39), 3 - transport infrastructure (38), 4 – government (29), 5 – territorial location (19), 6 – cross-border connectivity (15), 7 – education (14), 8 – access to finance (13), 9 - Internal political turbulences (12), 10 – red tape (11), 11 - youth engagement (10), 12 – state interference (9), 13 – legislation (8), 14 – institutions (7), 15 – business environment (7), 16 – state trade policy (6), 17 – corruption (6), 18 – nepotism (6), 19 - judiciary (5), 20 – investments (4), 21 – affordable workforce (3), 22 – regulations (3).

Table 12. Categories frequency: negative

	Territorial location	Transport infrastructure	Cross-border connectivity	State trade policy	Institutions	Cultural context	Education	Skills	Youth engagement	Affordable workforce	Government	Judiciary	State interference	Regulations	Internal political turb.	Business environment	Legislation (tax & proc.)	Red tape	Corruption	Nepotism	Investments	Access to finance	Other
All	19	38	15	6	7	48	14	39	10	3	29	5	9	3	12	7	8	11	6	6	4	13	19
Georgia	8	11	5	6	2	24	11	20	0	0	14	5	9	3	5	3	3	4	0	0	1	5	13
Romania	11	27	10	0	5	24	3	19	10	3	15	0	0	0	7	4	5	7	6	6	3	8	6
Iași	11	22	10	0	4	18	0	7	4	3	8	0	0	0	7	1	3	4	3	6	1	7	1
Arad-Timiș	0	5	0	0	1	6	3	12	6	0	7	0	0		0	3	2	3	3	0	2	1	5

Three categories were identified as having the frequency of more than 10 percent: cultural context - 15 percent and skills (13) and transport infrastructure (12). For Georgia top leading categories are: cultural context (frequency - 24) and skills (20); for Romania: transport infrastructure (27) and cultural context (24); for Iași: transport infrastructure (22); for Arad-Timișoara: skills (12).

Therefore, the category blocks were defined as follows, in order of importance: access to skills (114), access to markets (78) and access to finances (13). While same categories for Georgia sequenced in the following order by importance: access to markets (55), access to skills (30) and access to finances (5); Romania: access to skills (59), access to markets (48) and access to finances (8); Iași: access to skills (32), access to markets (43) and access to finances (7); Arad – Timișoara: access to skills (27), access to markets (5) and access to finances (1).

The categories were grouped under the timeline as well, referring to their occurrence in time: (i) before 1990, (ii) 1990 – 2019 and (iii) 2019 -. Most of the occurrences are related to the current times 1990-2019 (28) followed by historical, before 1990 (212) and possible future occurrence, after 2019 (3). In Georgia the time distribution is the following: 7, 125, 1; in Romania 21, 87, 2; in Iași: 15, 65, 1; in Arad-Timișoara: 6, 22, 1.

The categories were then assigned to the 10 principles of the SBA.

Table 13. Categories distribution across the SBA 10 principles

	Entrepreneurship	Second chance	Think small	Administration	State aid & proc	A to Finance	Single market	Skills & Innov.	Environment	Internationalization
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
All	64	1	24	76	15	16	45	61	1	52
Georgia	12	0	6	36	4	6	17	34	1	26
Romania	52	1	18	40	11	10	28	27	0	26
Iași	37	0	10	33	7	5	22	6	0	21
Arad-Timiș	15	1	8	7	4	5	6	21	0	5

The SBA principles corresponding to the maximum number of categories are in the following order: 1 – administration (76), 2 - entrepreneurship (64), 3 – skills and innovations (61), 4 – internationalization (52), 5 – single market (45), 6 – access to finance (16), 7 – state aid and procurement (15), 8 – think small (1) 9 – second chance (1), 10 - environment (1).

7. Discussion of Results

In Georgia, respondents tend to repeat the business influencing factors exceedingly in a negative context (137), rather than a positive one (23), while in Romania it is vice-versa, negative – 132 and positive 149; however, it is driven by the economically-developed Arad-Timișoara area, negative – 51 and positive – 102 (twice as much), while in Iași, negative accounts - 81 and positive – 47. It is not as extreme as in Georgia, but certainly it is different from the Arad-Timișoara area.

In terms of total frequency 1 - cultural context (86) and 2 – skills (62) amounted two exclusively leading positions. And this finding corresponds to the initial hypothesis that the current quantitative surveys do not fully capture the specifics of the transitional countries, because in none of them was the "cultural context" identified as a separate dimension.

The cultural context is the most frequently repeated category in positive context – 37, followed by – skills (25), and investments (20). However, its distribution across the areas is very different. Its lead in the positive context is driven by Arad-Timișoara – 36, while in Iași – 1 and 0 in Georgia. All events and cases named under the cultural context took place before 1990 and before the creation of the united Romanian state.

> Maria-Teresia [18c] brought better institutions, openness, curiosity here [Arad], that makes us now better entrepreneurs.

It is one of the citations and its context has been repeated several times by all the respondents from the Arad-Timișoara area.

Skills are driven by Romania only and the frequency is almost similar in Arad-Timișoara – 14 and Iași – 11, in both cases the respondents refer to the formal education system which delivered professional skills driven by the respective universities, while the entrepreneurial skills are not counted under the positive context.

The investments category is solely driven by Arad-Timișoara – 19. Contextually, the investment category is more connected to the territorial location category than to access to finances. The respondents assume the investments were driven by their close proximity to Western Europe.

> we are the entry gate to Romania; we are easy to reach and when someone [an investor] comes to Romania, they first stop here [in Banat].

After this initial analysis it is obvious that the cultural context is perceived as the driving force behind the success of the private entities from Arad-Timișoara; by this logic, any part of Romania which did not experience the Habsburg rule and Georgia entirely would be less developed if there had been only this category.

This concept fully corresponds to the already mainstream theories that there is a strong impact of historical legacy on economic performance and political developments as it was discussed by North (1990). A growing number of scholars underline the persistence of influence of the historical events because of formal institutions and cultural norms transmitted through the generations. After 2000, there is a rising number of scholarly articles covering this phenomenon, such as La Porta, et al (1998), Bisin and Verdier (2000), Acemoglu, et al (2001), Nunn (2009), Comin, et al (2010), Voigtlaender and Voth (2012), Grosfeld et al (2013).

In terms of the negative context, by frequency the leading categories are: 1 - cultural context (48), 2 – skills (39) and 3 - transport infrastructure (38). Cultural context is frequented negatively evenly in Georgia – 24 and Romania – 24, however in Romania it is led by Iași – 18 and it naturally resonates with earlier findings.

In terms of negativity, the respondents refer to the Ottoman, Russian and Soviet empires.

> Impact of the past [negative] – it influenced almost equally Georgia and Latvia. However, Georgia has been kept under the Soviet system longer than Baltic countries, that mirrored in the generations [of entrepreneurs].

Or

> Phanariotes were buying their domains here [Moldavia] and then they were selling the government positions to make money. Kickbacks was a culture [was referring to the Ottoman rule over Moldavia].

These findings further strengthen a theory of the influence of historical events on the economy through the cultural norms.

From the very beginning, Iași and Georgia are grouped vs. Arad-Timișoara in terms of cultural context. The data suggests the socialist past has a negative impact on the current business skills; however, it is only a part of other historical layers. Nevertheless, it is obviously a strong force as it is perceived such in Georgia.

It is interesting that the socialist past is blamed not only for the absence of the modern business skills. It is also named as a reason for the lower industrial development:

> Ceaușescu was hesitant to build anything in Moldovia because he was afraid the Russians would invade, so he built all factories in the South.

Or

> "The Communist rule was different here [Transylvania], the land cadastre created by the Habsburgs was kept and it took less time to reintroduce it when they were gone"

this is how respondents from Timișoara explained the early access to the landing capital for the local entrepreneurs.

The second most frequent negative category is skills. It has almost the same weight in both countries, Georgia – 20, Romania – 19, but unlike the cultural context, it is more frequent in Arad-Timișoara – 12 than in Iași – 9.

In all three areas the lack of business and professional skills is associated mainly with the Socialist past. This assumption is supported by the historical evidence that the entrepreneurship was largely prohibited in the Socialist era, therefore there is no surprise the skills category is among the top negative factors.

The third important negative narrative is the lack of transport infrastructure – 38, it is entirely led by Romania – 27 and within Romania it is Iași – 22, a place where the absence of highways and the low quality of the railways is assumed to be a leading negative factor in the SMEs development.

> we lose 7 percent of our income because of transportation. We have to sell everything by this discount to be competitive because the logistics is more expensive here [Iași] compared to western Romania, by that exact amount.

This assumption of the respondents is well supported by the competitiveness report. Romania ranks 92 among 140 countries, next to Sierra Leone (91), while Turkey itself is on the 31st place, neighbouring Luxembourg (32) in the Road sub-component of the WEF's Global Competitiveness Report 2018.

The offsetting mechanisms of the cultural context are not effective in any of the countries either. On the contrary, the government category is among the leading negative influence factors; other related categories saturate the negative perceptions about the government. In Romania, it is the legislation, mainly the frequent changes of the fiscal legislation coupled with the internal political situation; while in Georgia it is the government interference into the business sector and the problems with the judiciary.

In both counties, instead of correcting the distortion brought by the socialist period, the governments are in passive role. The Arad-Timișoara area was lucky enough to inherit another layer from the Habsburg Empire and its close proximity to Western Europe.

While in Poland or, let's say, the Czech Republic, it is different, as they created institutions which were able to deal with the socialist past and correct the "norms".

The findings explain the Georgian "abnormality" too. The broad assumption of the professionals is driven by the fact that Georgia implemented business-friendly reforms, therefore the SMEs must have had the easier path. In fact, this is not supported by this research. The improvements made by the reforms are among the categories positively influencing the SMEs: regulations (4) and business environment (4) but its weight against the negative categories is too small. This finding also suggests the necessity of the holistic approach.

The research shows the shortcomings of the existing surveys.

Most of the surveys, including the SBA reviews, are based on the quantitative research methodologies. Their data is derived from the highly structured quantitative surveys performed among a limited number of entrepreneurs. The structured questionnaires do not create a chance for the respondents to deviate from the systematized answers, thus prohibiting the emergence of any theories different from the one narrative given in a survey/research.

These surveys and research are driven by the experience of the market economies, which is logical because of their prevalence and economic domination. This narrative simply excludes the categories important for the transitional countries from the former Socialist bloc.

Also, it is difficult to justify data obtained from the qualitative research by the statistical data because it simply does not exist. As a matter of fact, the SMEs were largely prohibited in the Socialist bloc countries, specifically in Georgia and in Romania under the Communist party.

Obviously, the cultural context does not determine the economic development, neither the SMEs development, it is the factor of negative influence (Georgia and Romania's communist past); however, it could be corrected through the replacement of the institutions. In other words, the cultural category is important as far as other categories (e.g. the government) are among the negative series.

Furthermore, the surveys do not capture the magnitude of the relative underperformance. In the SBA review, Romania has two leading underperforming dimensions: innovations and regulatory framework. It would not have resulted in a very low performance in Iași but for other connected categories: skills and culture would not have been among the negative series. In other words, the underperformance in those pillars, connected to other critical categories hidden in the surveys, can mislead and distort the review significantly as it is obvious in the case of Georgia and in the case of Romania's regional disparities.

8. Conclusion

The cultural context has a significant impact on the SMEs in transitional countries. However, its impact can be mitigated through other categories. The persistence of the cultural context is driven by the lack of progress in other pillars (e.g. the government). The creation speed and the quality of the institutions are low and they are unable to replace the distorting cultural norms generated from the historical layers.

The leading surveys do not support the fair evaluation of the SME sectors in post-socialist, transitional countries. Their paradigm does not capture the magnitude of the challenges faced by these countries. The methodologies used by these surveys do not support the emergence of other theories either, thus creating "imitating" results instead of fair and factual ones.

This research shows the transitional countries need to design more comprehensive reviews in response to their specific realities. It also strongly supports the holistic approach, showing that the success in all SBA pillars still cannot guarantee the real success of the SMEs because there might be ten times more negatively influencing factors and those are not captured by the reviews, but their cumulative impact is higher than the one from SBA successes.

Furthermore, the research suggests skills to be the most essential category. It also shows that the market access is an equally important category in the higher block-category dimension. Contrary to the SBA survey, the research shows a severe negative impact of the limited market access to the SMEs because the SBA does not capture its essential part – infrastructure.

NOTES

1 The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, an intergovernmental economic organisation with 36 member countries, founded in 1961 to stimulate economic progress and world trade. As of 2017, the OECD member states collectively comprised 62.2 percent of global nominal GDP.

2 Formed in 1945 the World Bank is an international financial institution that provides loans and grants to the governments of poorer countries for the purpose of pursuing capital projects.

3 The Doing Business project, launched in 2002 by the World Bank Group, looks at domestic small and medium-size companies and measures the regulations applying to them through their life cycle. Based on this measurement it produces the world rankings in "Doing Business" by countries.

4 Georgia and the European Union signed Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) in 2014 along with Association Agreement. Georgia took several commitments, including the statistics harmonization with the EU.

5 OECD SME Policy Index Eastern Partner Countries 2016 is the OECD, EC, EBRD review of the progress of the Eastern European Neighbourhood countries performance related to the SBA pillars.

6 Eorostat is the statistics agency of the European Union.

7 The small business act (SBA) is an overarching framework for the EU policy on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The SBA review, first published in 2011, is a major landmark in tracking the implementation of the small business act. The EU members are apprised annually through reviews and a similar process applies to the emerging countries through the joint review process of the EU and OECD.

8 Summary of the report of the Committee of Inquiry of the United Kingdom on Small Firms 1971.

9 The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) was formed in 1966. It is a specialized agency within the United Nations. The mission of UNIDO is to promote and accelerate inclusive and sustainable industrial development.

10 Geostat is the national statistics agency of Georgia.

11 Georgian national currency – Lari, its international denomination is GEL. Its exchange rates could be checked at the official webpage of the central bank of Georgia, at: https://www.nbg.gov.ge/index.php?m=2&lng=eng

12 Eastern Partnership (EaP) EU and six partner countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) established in 2009 the Eastern Partnership (EaP), a joint initiative building also on bilateral relations.

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STATE-LED MODERNIZATION AND MIDDLE CLASS SUBJECTIVITIES IN POST-SOVIET AZERBAIJAN

Abstract

This paper brings into to discussion the preliminary findings of an ongoing research project on the characteristics and dynamics of Baku's middle class. More exactly, it aims to examine the relationship between state-led modernization and class transformation in the capital city of Azerbaijan in the context of the modernization and de-Sovietization processes. Azerbaijan inherited a particular pre-revolutionary stratification, influenced by oil discoveries and the first stage of oil exploitation, combined with almost a century of Soviet dominance. During the last two decades, Azerbaijani authorities redirected the revenues from the extraction industries to transform the capital city, Baku, into an architectural mix of the European and Dubai models. However, transforming the face of the country brought with it the transformation of its inhabitants. Eventually, to fulfill the new standards, the government aimed to create a new class which was schooled in "a different, occidental way".

Based on ethnographic data collected throughout 2016 and 2018 in Baku, this contribution examines how the perceived need of modernization of the country, and its citizens, basically comes through the importation and implantation of Western goods, manners and education on local values and norms. However, the modernization project seems to focus mostly on the capital city and only recently have some modest modernization projects started in the other cities of the country. The concentration of the development projects, beautification of the city, expansion of the luxurious shops and shopping centers, and the policy for the importation of skilled foreign specialists, were developed to cater for the local emerging middle classes' new aspirations. The imported occidental lifestyle combined with the luxurious Dubai style, led to the new emerging middle classes' need to distinguish themselves through consumption.

Keywords: Middle class, modernization, social change, Azerbaijan, urban transformation, Europeanization

Introduction

"Azerbaijan is rich. Now it wants to be famous" states an article in the *New York Times* magazine.[1] Although the article seems to be a eulogistic portrait of Ibrahim Ibrahimov, "one of the richest men in Azerbaijan", as the *New York Times* author claims, it also provides rich insights into the rapid urban transformations. The revenues from oil and gas extractions made the recovery of the post-Soviet Azerbaijan relatively fast in comparison with other post-Soviet countries from the region. The Azerbaijani government paid special attention to "putting Azerbaijan on the map", as the locals use to say, by hosting international big events, or as the *New York Times* suggests, to making it *famous*. Consequently, especially in the capital city, an intensive modernization process has started; including the beautification of the city, modernization of the infrastructure, improving the public services, etc. a phenomenon called *urban boosterism* by Natalie Koch and Anar Valieyev. The aforementioned researchers analyzed the political strategies behind the big events organized in three cities around the Caspian Sea: Baku, Astana and Ashgabat, all of them post-Soviet cities rich in energy resources.

During the last two decades of independence, Azerbaijani politics have been oriented towards modernization, Europeanization and purification from Soviet residues. Part of the oil revenues has been oriented towards the transformation of the country following a combination of European models and successful development models of the Gulf countries and the Arabian Peninsula. Both the international press and the research speak even of a process of Dubaization[2] of the capital of Azerbaijan.

However, the unexpected oil crisis slowed down the rapid transformations of the capital city. Just before starting my fieldwork, the country had already faced two sharp currency devaluations of almost 50%[3] and has been affected by the economic crisis generated mostly by the drop of the crude oil prices and the unsuccessful administration of the oil revenues in the last decades. Nevertheless, my previous experience in Azerbaijan (between 2011 and 2014) was unquestionably beneficial and proved useful in understanding the current situation and dynamics.

Methodological Remarks and Conceptualization

Drawn upon ethnographic-based methods carried out in Baku, the capital city and most important city of Azerbaijan, between 2016 and 2018, this

contribution intends to offer only a fragmented reflection of the middle class identity. The extensive fieldwork allowed me to observe the daily life of different middle class clusters. Besides more formal interviews, I have spent nearly two years observing their way of dressing or acting publicly, looking at their shopping patterns, their school or hospital choices, being involved in their celebrations and social interactions. We shared long kitchen talks accompanied by the usual *pürrengi cay*[4], we shared food, ideas, discussions, and sometimes even political contradictions. Although my approach abounds in thick descriptions, it is still far from providing a full picture of the complex Azerbaijani social identity.

As noticed during the fieldwork, the understanding of this social stratum opens a big debate, and thus the reason I consider it necessary to clarify my conceptualization of the middle class. The definition provided here is assembled from the categorizations that came to light repeatedly from the interviews or informal discussions. To be middle class, in this particular context, means to be part of a layer of society where the distinction is made by profession, education, manners, and an *assumed modernity*. The concept of *assumed modernity* has sprung from the various formal or informal conversations with my respondents and can also be found in the literature that looks at the formation of the middle class especially in the Middle East and Asia. In his study of middle-class training in the city of Aleppo at the beginning of the twentieth century, Watenpaugh notes that the discourse around the birth of the middle class focuses on modernization and Europeanization, a discussion that in a certain way appeared to me very similar to the current trend in Azerbaijan. Most of my interlocutors stressed the need for modernization through the importation of "European culture" into Azerbaijan. I do not consider income an absolute criterion for being part of this class, but I admit that income could offer the possibility of achieving a middle class status.

Referring to the Azerbaijani context, I use the term middle classes rather than middle class, considering that the professional class, once called intelligentsia, now in an economic decline, forms a middle class in itself, one different from the new middle class emerging as an effect of the economic transformation of the last decades. Although their economic status is arguable in most of the cases, the professional middle class (professors, doctors, civil servants) should not be excluded from the broader framework of the middle class based on an economic criterion only. Middle class position is still important when it comes to good manners, good taste, respect in society. From another perspective, the

official income does not correspond in most cases studied with the actual income, given the importance of the second economy and the informal economy very present in post-Soviet spaces. Professors usually have a second income from private lessons (*repetitorstva*) to "correct" the gaps. Doctors, especially in the public system, complete their official salaries with "gifts" from patients who hope to get special attention and better treatment. Even civil servants, taking advantage of an intricate bureaucracy, complete their income by using the power of their status and access to needed resources to resolve certain situations citizens may find themselves in, in exchange for informal payments. In the case of the bureaucracy it is important to underline that the government invests and has partially solved the problem by creating the ASAN Xidmət agencies[5]. From my personal experience, and from the experience of my respondents, ASAN Xidmət agencies seem to have eliminated the bureaucratic processes and informal payments offered in the past. I will not dwell on the phenomenon of the second economy or the informal economy as the subject has been intensely studied, especially in post-Soviet and post-socialist countries. The Informal economy in the Southern Caucasus and specifically in Azerbaijan are studied by Huseyn Aliyev and Lale Yalçin-Heckmann.

In addition to the informal economic exchanges, the practice of shared economy and strong family bonds, in which material goods are distributed within micro-communities, minimize the importance of the individual income. Money and goods redistribution between the enlarged family members is not perceived as an aid, but more like a moral obligation, as part of "tradition". It is not at all surprising that a person with a salary of around four hundred *manat*, the equivalent of two hundred and fifty dollars a month, would be able to take a trip abroad at least once a year, access expensive private health services, and enjoy a lifestyle characteristic of the middle class.

Along with enriching the theory of middle class, this approach will contribute to filling in a gap in the literature of regional studies. The hostile political environment towards researchers kept Azerbaijan away from the direct interest of scholars. In terms of ethnographic studies, there are very limited prospects, especially in the field of ethnolinguistics and local minorities groups.

The 'Middle Class'

To investigate the changes in social stratification of post-Soviet Azerbaijan is a very intriguing opportunity. The middle class theories abound and can be found in a wide range of explorations. However, the literature is by far more generously populated with the westernized approach to the middle class. As Ammara Maqsood remarkably notes, the western middle class, from where the concept evolved, and the middle class groups in the postcolonial context, are two different realities, with their particular subjectivities.

From a theoretical perspective of the social theories, Azerbaijan offers a unique intersection between two distinctive areas. Along with the theories related to social class and urban transformations of the post-Soviet space, the field research showed a similarity to the theories of modernization and class found mainly in the research studies of the Middle East. Studying the emergent middle class in the city of Aleppo, Watenpaugh links the new urban middle class and the lengthy process of modernization found in the Eastern Mediterranean. Expanding the theoretical framework provided by Watenpaugh, I focus on the results of the ongoing modernization process in the middle class formation. In addition, Ammara Maqsood in a recent ethnographic study, offers a comprehensive analysis of the interplay between both middle class and modernization in Pakistan.

Alternatively, there are a few remarkable contributions from scholars focussed on Russian societal changes and inequalities in the new economic phase. Patico's notable study provides a view on the Russian professional middle class, represented by school teachers from Saint-Petersburg. As Patico observes, the Russian professional middle class encapsulates both the occupational prestige and the daily economic struggle.

A consistent framework on class subjectivities in post-socialist Eastern Europe has provided a new perspective in examining the middle class in the transforming societies. The scholars explore the tastes, moralities, normalcy of the new money and new needs.

Мещанство, Bourgeoisie, Intelligentsia and Different Forms of a proto-Middle Class: Historical Considerations

To aid our understanding of the situation of the middle class in Azerbaijan today, I propose to briefly examine the historical past of the proto-middle classes in the region. The understanding of the concept of social class

during the Soviet era brought with it a denigrating sense, a fact that left an imprint on the modern perception of the class in the post-Soviet countries. The fall of Azerbaijan under Soviet administration in April 1920, also brought the destruction of the aristocracy and the new local bourgeoisie created in the pre-Soviet period. The destruction of the elite, especially in the 1930s, obviously influences the current social stratification. The policies of the Soviet Union on the elimination of the old elite, the abolition of social classes and the construction of a utopian society based on equality, have done nothing but create another social order equally stratified in the social classes. Despite the official discourse, as demonstrated already in the research on social stratification in the Soviet period, the supposed equality was only a myth. In reality the social stratification of the Soviet Union was very complex and sophisticated. Roughly speaking, and without going into too much detail we can speak of three social classes during the late Soviet era: peasants and the working class; intelligentsia; and the ruling class, also known as nomenklatura.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the term middle class entered Azerbaijan through mass media and in the last decade also through political discourse, with its economic significance attached. Furthermore, revenues from the exploitation of natural resources (especially oil and gas) and fast economic growth have given Azerbaijani citizens enormous hopes and aspirations. A new economic class began to emerge and at the same time the professional middle class (called *bakynskaya intelligentsia* in Russian or *ziyali* in the Azerbaijani version) was stuck in the austerity caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the changes that followed. The old intelligentsia is too weak and impoverished to form a solid middle class and the new, economically powerful emerging middle class is still too small and fragile to be considered a class in its own right. A coexistence between these two middle class groups is almost impossible because the intelligentsia perceives the new emerging class as *parvenu* (especially the people who moved to Baku from different regions of Azerbaijan). The status of the old intelligentsia, nowadays is often pitied, and it is not perceived as part of the middle class by the new emerging class. This professional middle class enjoys social status, but does not always have the means to lead a decent life. The two categories analyzed must be taken as ideal categories, but in both cases there are also large areas of exception: both in the professional class perfectly adapted to the new neo-liberal market, and in the new emerging class, which manages to get more than just an economic legitimization.

Middle Class in Azerbaijan and the Local Political Narratives

However, in this context, the formation of a middle class has become a point of reference. From the local political perspective, the creation of a strong middle class is part of the country's modernization process. The eradication of extreme poverty and expansion of the middle class issue became priority projects, at least in the public discourses of the local authorities, emphasizing that the problem of "absolute poverty" will constantly be in the centre of attention again, and along with that, the expansion of the middle class and the strengthening of the role of this class is one of the main purposes. The experience of various countries shows that countries with a stronger middle class are more sustainable from political, economic, social and other perspectives, and have a higher development potential.[6] In March 2014, upon receiving the delegation of Henry Kerali, the newly appointed World Bank Regional Director for the South Caucasus, the president of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, pointed out that the country was carrying out targeted measures to improve the social situation of the middle class"[7]. The middle class issue is not only on the political agenda of Azerbaijani authorities, but international organizations and local researchers have also shown a growing interest in the economic middle class topic.

In a report of June 2015, the World Bank estimates an increase to 29% of the middle class of Azerbaijan, with a distribution in Baku to 44%[8]. The situation of the middle class and the impact of the recent economic changes have also been discussed in a media report on the regional office of Radio Free Europe (Radio Azadliq). The interviewed researchers argue that the Azerbaijani middle class is seriously shrinking as a result of the oil crisis and the devaluation of the national currency. The topic is analyzed from an economic perspective as the cited researchers are mostly economists. As shown, the middle class situation has gained an interest in the last years; however the outlook is still limited to an economic approach.

Even though, the economic framework provides an established size of the middle class in Azerbaijan, from a social anthropological angle, to measure the Azerbaijani middle class is an impossible mission and it is not the intention of this research.

"I am middle class limited edition". A false dis-identification

Nevertheless, despite all the attention to the situation of the middle class mentioned above, introducing myself in Baku and announcing my research topic, I am constantly asked by locals and by foreign residents in Baku, if "there is a middle class in Azerbaijan", or if I "managed" yet to find some middle class people. These questions are intended more to mark a surprise and/or to express doubt about the existence of the middle class in Azerbaijan today. Moreover, I noticed that whenever I introduced my research to someone new, I also had my answer prepared for the inevitable question: "Is there a middle class here?"

The perception of the middle-class in common knowledge is generally associated with the economic aspects of the middle stratum. According to this understanding, the income is the main criterion which draws the lines of social stratification. In this article, I intend to show that class structure in post-Soviet countries is more complex than a quantitative analyze of income and the ability to accumulate material goods. Moreover, this contribution argues that belonging to a class is expressed not through group identification but in asserting a distinction from the other classes.

The insignificance and weakness of this social stratum is constantly emphasized by my informants: "Middle class, ahhh! There are a few of us left" (claim the old intelligentsia) and "There is no middle class here" but at the same time "I am middle class" (pretend the new formed middle class group, emphasizing their success and denying a group belonging). This apparently contradictory phrase became a leitmotiv in my research. The prevalent economic perception of a class belonging shows an apparent absence of class identity, and a very sharp distinction and belonging to distinctive groups.

From this perspective, class identity seems absent; moreover it looks more as a class dis-identification. However, beside the narratives of the middle class existence or absence, the research shows a strong group-belonging in distinction to the other groups: "mi bakintsy" (we bakuvians) in opposition to the "rayoniye" (countryside internal migrants); we "kul'turnye ludy" (educated/well-mannered people) or in the Azerbaijani version *ziyalı* (intellectuals) in opposition to "nekul'turniye" (uneducated/ill-mannered people), we "Russian speakers" in opposition to "Azerbaijani speakers". The class dis-identification is just a false premise, the absence of a strong class identity is materialized in other class marks.

When speaking about class belonging, Azerbaijani people claim that one "does not need to be part of a class, but has to have class".

Living in the Middle

As the sociologist Sergey Rumyantsev argues, Azerbaijan is in a constant process of modernization of the "country and its citizens". However, the modernization project seems to focus mostly on the capital city and only recently have some modest modernization projects started in the other cities around the country. The countryside is still totally absent from the modernization process. The concentration of the development projects, beautification of the city, expansion of the luxurious shops and shopping centers, the importation of foreign skilled specialists, created new aspirations for the local emerging middle class. The imported occidental lifestyle combined with the luxurious Dubai style fostered in the new emerging middle class a need of distinction through consumption. The "modernized" lifestyle, including the European manners, way of thinking, way of acting, contradicted local norms and values and started to create an identity crisis. As one of informants pointed out:

> When you are on one side or another you know very well who you are. When you are poor you live in your community with you customs and social norms, when you are rich you live as you wish, nobody judges you because people respect money more-than people here. And that's fine, you know to what side you belong. But when you live in the middle, you try to live with both sides inside and this just creates an inner struggle. You live a double life, in a way you try to fulfill the societal traditional norms, but at the same time you aspire to a modern life, a European lifestyle that is contradictory to our norms and values.

Living with the struggle of being in the middle where someone has to deal with the norms dictated by tradition and the aspirations of a modern lifestyle, this is what links people and makes them want to be part of the same middle class.

Embracing the Imposed Modernity

The rapid change of the city landscape made the Baku residents proud of the transformation of the city. They will proudly express their appreciation for the strangely shaped skyscrapers, these heterotopias of future, for the new Western luxurious shops, for the international events that Azerbaijani authorities were keen to host. Even though many of them could not afford to visit the commercial spaces (restaurants, cinemas, shops, etc.) in the newly built skyscrapers, to shop in the luxurious shops or to attend most of the international events. The new symbols of cityscape became objects of admiration and desire. From time to time, a good friend, Sabina, would invite me to Port Baku Mall (a new Shopping Center - part of a bigger commercial space and luxurious apartments - that would sell only expensive brands). She worked nearby and enjoyed walking on the mall's empty, but clean, shiny and perfumed corridors. Our walks were limited only to window shopping, she would show me what she liked but we never entered the shops. She would also show me the "best pizza place in town" that she knew only because her foreign boyfriend, a BP employee, invited her there. One day she confessed to me that she likes to invite me to walk there also because it makes her feel better when she is accompanied by a foreign friend and people see her speaking English around. "People here like foreigners, our people think that all foreigners are loaded with money. This is because they see only BP employees that are indeed loaded with money. When you accompany a foreigner they respect you more. Well, it depends, sometimes it is the opposite. Such is our culture, full of contradictions." And she laughed. Once, while we were walking on the Port Baku corridors trying to find inspiration for the New Year's Eve Party dress, she showed me several evening dresses that she liked in the display windows and told me: "you see how we do here? We get inspired by the things we cannot afford, and we go after to the Bine or Sederek bazar to find a Turkish or Chinese made dress that hopefully will remind us of the dress from the Port Baku Mall display windows. And we wear the Chinese dress pretending that we wear an expensive fashionable dress. It's all we do here. We pretend. But this is because we see things, we want them, but we cannot afford what we want, so we will pretend that we have more than we actually do."

Concluding Remarks

This paper has explored the subjectivities of the middle class in the modernization process of post-Soviet Azerbaijan. The main focus of this paper was to answer what middle class means in present-day Azerbaijan and what is the social role of this social strata. The formation of a stable middle class has become a priority project for the Azerbaijani authorities. Nevertheless, despite the increasing interest in the condition of the middle class, this social stratum is still weak and lacks in a class unity. The class identity is expressed through a group belonging, in distinction to other groups.

The impoverished professional middle class seeks distinction through the language they speak, manners, education and occupation. Meanwhile, the emerging middle class distinguishes itself in terms of power of consumption, including holidays or/and education overseas, western products, westernized lifestyle. These two groups will not see themselves as belonging to the same class and will claim that their position is distinctive from the others. However, to mark clear borders between these two groups of the same class is impossible, as they intersect in their aspirations and achievements.

The rapid modernization process brought to the country new aspirations and a desired western life style that placed the emerging middle class in conflict with the local values and traditions.

NOTES

1 https://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/10/magazine/azerbaijan-is-rich-now-it-wants-to-be-famous.html accessed 05.03.2018

2 Dubaization is a term introduced in 2004 by Yasser Elsheshtawy at the Conference of the International Association for Studies of Traditional Environments in Sharjah, UAE, referring to a certain type of Dubai influence in Cairo. In a short time, the term was used with various meanings, but the most common and always used when talking about the Dubaization of Azerbaijan refers to large architectural projects especially glass and steel skyscrapers. In Azerbaijan, in the various interviews, people also referred to a space for luxury consumption, a space of desire and modernity.

3 The first currency depreciation hit Azerbaijan on February 21st 2015, when the national currency, manat, lost around 33% of its value overnight. The second depreciation wave happened on the night of 21st of December 2015.

4 *Pürrengi çay* is a strong brewed black tea.

5 The first ASAN Xidmət agency was created after the presidential decree signed on July 13, 2012. http:// www.asan.gov.az/en/about Literary, ASAN is the acronym for Azerbaijan Service and Assessment Network, originally called in English, in Azerbaijani language *asan* means *easy.*

6 http://www.president.az/files/future_en.pdf accessed on 27.04.2016

7 http://en.president.az/mobile/articles/11172 accessed on 15.03.2017

8 World Bank report is based on income analyses before the devaluation of the national currency. However. According to quoted World Bank report middle class in Azerbaijan increased between 2007 and 2012 from 4,26% to 28,89%. In World Bank report middle class is considered any household with a minimum per capita consumption above 10 USD PPP. http:// documents.

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THE OTHER WITCH: ETHNIC MINORITIES AND WITCHCRAFT ACCUSATIONS IN THE GRAND DUCHY OF LITHUANIA

Abstract

The paper discusses the features of witch-hunts in the ethnically and religiously diverse society of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The sources demonstrate the involvement of some Christian (German, Russian) and non-Christian (Jewish, Tatar) minority groups in witch accusations in different roles: as accusers, defendants or suspects. The specifics of their involvement originate from their social and economic roles as well as from their cultural traits. The article attempts to explore the reasons for the accusations, the variety of beliefs about witchcraft and strategies to counter it and also the way they reflected the relations between the mentioned aliens and the surrounding majority.

Keywords: Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Lithuania, Belarus, Lithuanian Jews, Lithuanian Tatars, German diaspora, Russians in Lithuania, cultural borders, ethnic minorities, witch trials, witchcraft.

In the majority of societies, witch-hunts were usually a search for an internal enemy within the framework of kinship, neighborhood, and community.[1] Thus, no wonder that the bulk of cases involved participants of the same or similar cultural, ethnic and religious background. However, how did it work in highly heterogeneous societies that consisted of multiple major and minor ethnic and religious groups with their distinguishing social positions and cultural patterns?

The case of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania allows for an exploration of such a situation. Despite the Union of Lublin (1569), the Grand Duchy of Lithuania preserved significant autonomy within the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, with distinguishable features of statehood, legislation,

court system, as well as its complex religious and cultural heterogeneity. From a religious point of view, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was overlapping Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant denominations and later a core of the Brest church union (1596) that created the Greek-Catholic church. Except for the diverse dominant population of Lithuanians and Ruthenians (and to a certain extent, Poles could also be listed there), the Grand Duchy of Lithuania possessed a variety of minorities that differed in terms of their cultural and religious features, their roles in the economy, politics and social structure. Consequently, the reaction of these groups to witchcraft was uneven. The participation of minority groups in witch-hunts is a good marker of their position in Lithuanian society, of the degree and specifics of integration, as well as an indicator of the attitude of the majority towards them.

Lithuanian witch persecutions started in the middle of the 16th century and lasted until 1776, when the Diet abolished the death penalty for witchcraft. Generally, it was not intensive: only about 130 known records from Lithuanian courts considered witchcraft, as far as the highly fragmented and unevenly researched surviving archives allow finding. More than half of them occurred in the countryside within the patrimonial jurisdiction of gentry over their subjects or before communal peasant juries (in Ruthenia), the rest came from noble county courts or burgher city courts based on the Magdeburg right. Nineteen witch cases involve representatives of minority groups in different roles. In addition, there is fragmented information in other narrative sources that allows the addition of at least two more cases. This is enough to understand that the minorities were not indifferent bystanders, with sources noting Jews, Tatars, Germans and Russians. Of course, the list of minorities living in the Grand Duchy was much longer, but there is no information about the involvement of Karaits, Scots, Dutch, Italians, and Roma.

Usually, the Early Modern witch-hunt is attributed to the features of Christian societies. The heterogeneous Lithuanian society included at least two large non-Christian ethnic groups: Jews and Tatars. Both possessed significant legal, religious and cultural autonomy but had to communicate with Christian powerful and powerless neighbors. The borders of their autonomy – despite legal and customary prescriptions – were far from totally impenetrable. Thus, was the witch-hunt a phenomenon that managed to cross these cultural barriers? Did Christians direct accusations created for internal enemies towards a neighboring Other? Did Muslims

and Jews fear Christian witches and how did they counter this common menace?

In the pre-modern world, ethnic distinctions were less sharp if the faith was similar, which is why the Christian migrants were less alienated and they were more integrated or assimilated. However, some migrants (in particular, German noblemen and merchants) stayed in touch with their native culture and land by mean of business, religious or kin relations that supported their identity and distinction. What is more, Christian foreigners brought their specific worldview and beliefs towards witchcraft, especially those coming from the areas of more intensive witch-hunts. Therefore, did denominational and cultural distinctions contribute to the involvement of migrants in the Lithuanian witch persecution? Did their witchcraft beliefs have any influence?

This article applies a wider, cross-culturally applicable definition of witchcraft: malicious supernatural aggression by means of spells and rituals or innate individual power, outside the framework of legitimate religion and ritual. The work also shares the anthropological approach that witchcraft beliefs could be understood as rational within their local context. The concept of witchcraft was not only the explanation of misfortunes and part of the local process of social control. It also contributed to the resolution of interpersonal tensions by either repairing problematic social relationships, or splitting them.[2]

Due to its implicit social function, the idea of maleficent witchcraft was – and still is – widely spread in different societies, often accompanied with established measures to counter the threat and to fix the harm caused. Contrarily, the concept of diabolic witchcraft as a human-hostile devil-led conspiracy of witches was the late medieval and the early modern invention of certain Western intellectual circles. The spread of this invention, first of all among power elites of different levels, changed the attitude towards any supposed or actual practitioners of magic, criminalized them as public offenders and legitimized their uncovering and persecution. However, this process was uneven, especially at the peripheries and borderlands of the Western culture of the time. Trial records show that Lithuanian elites more or less knew about the Western concept and criminalized witchcraft in legislation. Nevertheless, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, with its variety of Christian and non-Christian, Western and non-Western ethnic and religious groups, demonstrates the complexity of adoption and application of this new anti-witchcraft approach.

At the same time, Protestant and Catholic Church reforms defined all magic practices outside the religious rite and the whole concept of witchcraft as superstition – not a crime but an error to be eradicated. The struggle against superstition undertaken by ecclesiastic (and, to a certain extent, lay) authorities tended to constrain witchcraft accusations on the one hand, but at the same time stoke the system of counter-magic practices and practitioners that had eased witch fears on a local level before. This process affected the Grand Duchy of Lithuania but the religious diversity of the state made its effects uneven.

1. Historical Context

Witch-hunts in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania emerged almost simultaneously with an active foreign migration, which had a significant impact on the economic, social and cultural life of the country. Lithuanian monarchs and feudal lords stimulated the migration of skillful craftsmen, recruited foreign warriors, and employed educated professionals, both Christian and non-Christian.

Significant Jewish immigration to the lands of the Grand Duchy started in the late 14th century. Grand dukes and the nobility benefited from skillful newcomers and granted them privileges and protection, despite the discontent of the Catholic Church that was lobbying for numerous restrictions. In fact, the Jews became a separate estate with its specific rights and duties. There were many autonomous institutions of different levels, including craftsmen's guilds and self-governed communities known as *kahals.*

Thanks to their capital and international networking, Jewish merchants took a huge share of internal and international trade, including the key grain export business. Jews actively operated as leaseholders in the nobility's land holdings, the most popular were leases of inns, pubs, and breweries, but they also held farms, manors and even huge estates. Over time, this ethnic group gained a crucial role in the economy of the country.

However, the increasing Jewish migration, successful economic competition and participation in the exploitation of enserfed peasants led to the growth of social tensions and sharp contradictions. As a result, the Jewish diaspora suffered great atrocities during devastating military conflicts of the 17th-18th centuries, but quite quickly recovered after all the catastrophes.

In conditions of discrimination and segregation on the one hand, but a relatively safe and propitious environment on the other, Jews of the Poland-Lithuanian Commonwealth managed to develop the most prosperous Jewish diaspora of the time and become an extremely influential minority within Christian society.[3]

Tatars were another significant non-Christian population group. The first Tatars sporadically settled in the Grand Duchy as war captives or refugees from the strife of the Golden Horde in the early 14th century. Later other Muslim migrants from Crimea, Volga, and Siberia joined them. Tatar warriors and their families settled mostly in the Trakai, Vilnius and Navahrudak voivodeships. Their population was not large: about 7000 in the 16th century and 9000 in the 17th century.[4]

Tatars possessed relative autonomy. Their communities followed Muslim religious laws. Imams (called *mołła*) were usually judges in religious and civil matters, whilst criminal cases had to be brought to state courts.[5] However, their society was not as isolated as the Jewish one. The Muslim religion was a core of their identity while other ethnic features were soon abandoned: since the 16th century Lithuanian Tatars have spoken Ruthenian (later also Polish) as their native language and used it in Arabic script not only for secular writings but for religious ones as well.[6] They created monogamous families, sometimes with Christian women. At the same time, Tatars didn't break their relations with the Muslim world, especially the Ottoman Empire, and it was common to invite educated imams from Crimea or Volga.[7] The social status of the Tatar military elite was quite similar to the Christian gentry, except for political rights; whilst the common folk mostly consisted of free farmers and burghers.

The relations between Tatars and Christians were much more peaceful in comparison to the position of the Jewish diaspora. However, there were hard times: during the Counter-Reformation in the late 16th - early 17th centuries, the Catholic Church initiated various discriminatory restrictions for non-Catholics, and for Muslims in particular. Such discrimination led to the decrease of loyalty as manifested in emigration to the Ottoman Empire and even in the mass defections of the Tatar troops during the Polish-Ottoman war of 1672-1676.[8] However, in the 18th century Tatar-Christian relations were stabilized.

Many Christians from different European countries also temporarily or permanently moved to the Grand Duchy for various reasons. First, there were Germans, Italians, Dutch, Swedes and Scots. The most numerous and influential were the Germans. In comparison to the Polish Crown with

its influential urban and rural German communities, their migration to Lithuania was much less significant. Lithuanian Germans normally were dispersed all over the country and differed in their origin, social status, and profession. The only city with a significant share of people of this nationality was Kaunas.

Economic and political relations tied the Grand Duchy to Prussia, Courland and Livonia, so the bulk of Germans came from these regions. The Prussian nobility admired the liberties in Poland-Lithuania, readily moving there for service and adopting not only loyalty, but also the Polish noble culture.[9]

Despite the extensive economic and political encounters with its Eastern neighbors, the Russian population in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was very low and insignificant. It mostly consisted of religious or political refugees and war captives. Taking and resettling peasants and craftsmen was a part of looting the enemy's land. Peace treaties often demanded the return of prisoners but, in practice, it was difficult to control their implementation. The most numerous group of settlers were Russian Old-Believers that rejected the reforms of Patriarch Nikon in the mid-17th century and escaped persecutions by migrating to remote areas of Russia or to neighboring states. Their communities usually lived in quite a strict self-isolation, with numerous restrictions concerning contacts with infidels. Contrarily, other Russian refugees and captives were usually dispersed within the local population. They often integrated well in the Ruthenian environment, but in predominantly Catholic, western lands they remained more alienated.

2. The Other Accuses

Germans: Burgher fears and gentry justice

It would be logical to assume that migrants from German lands, the hottest spot of European witch-hunts, brought their most advanced witch beliefs and actively initiated witch trials in Lithuania. Indeed, they were in fact the most prolific accusers among the mentioned minorities, but their witch-hunt activity in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was much less enthusiastic then in their homelands and it had significant local features.

Kaunas was an important hub for trade with Prussia and the Baltic region in general. Except for foreign merchants, there lived a large group of local

German burghers.[10] It was also a major Reformation center, but of an unusual kind for Lithuania – Lutheranism. In 1552, 124 Lutheran families lived in the city, perhaps mostly of German origin.[11] At the same time, the city was a hotspot for witch trials at the early stage of the Lithuanian witch-hunts. The earliest recorded witch accusations occurred in the 1540s in Kaunas, and until 1627 there were six witch trials and four other registered accusations – more than in any other single place of the Grand Duchy at any time. At least three Kaunas trials involved accusers with German names.

The first record that contains a German name dates back to 1543 (it is the second oldest witch trial known).[12] It reports that a Kaunas butcher named Franc accused a blacksmith named Piotr from the town Veliuona of witchcraft: the latter had come to Franc's house and began to tear some plants. The *wójt* (city mayor) sent his people to bring in Piotr, but he denied being a witch, claiming that he was a "good man". That is all one can learn from the brief record. The next case occurred eight years later.[13] Late in the evening of August 1, 1551, Lenart Kolaw brought his slave maid Barbara to the Kaunas *wójt* accusing her of witchcraft. He saw her walking near the fireplace and then found under the threshold some hair, feathers and sand. Barbara voluntarily confessed that according to the advice of another woman she planned to put spells into the bed of her master to make him insane and cause death. Her master insisted that she should be imprisoned. The end of the case is unknown.

Despite the possible German origin of the accusers, one can hardly see any specifics in these cases that are very common for the whole period of the Lithuanian witch-hunts. However, one case was extremely distinctive. In October 1563, the Kaunas magistrate detained Kathryna for healing with herbs around the city.[14] Her confessions revealed that all the mentioned names of her customers were German: weaver Giert, Knebel, wife of Casper Libner, Derk Meirow. There are no hints to help us figure out whether Kathryna was also a German or a local Lithuanian woman who was credible to foreigners. In any case, she demonstrated the earliest Lithuanian engagement in diabolism: when asked where she had learned herbalism she willingly said that her teacher was the devil living in a swamp; about a year before he had come to her at night and taken her to his swamp. After the interrogation the court sent Kathryna back to prison for the next investigation – maybe, the magistrates had not anticipated that there would be such an extraordinary turn. Again, the continuation of the case is unknown. The idea that the devil attends a woman at night and drives her to a remote place and grants her with

secret knowledge was definitely related to the Western diabolic concept of witchcraft. Regardless of her ethnic origin, Kathryna belonged to the social circle of German burghers and felt the significant influence of the set of witch beliefs from German culture that clearly shaped her imagination.

There are no more known cases with German burghers involved. Another type is patrimonial trials conducted by lords of German origin that were at the same time plaintiffs and judges over their subjects. The protagonist of the first case is Wilhelm Tyzenhauz.[15] He belonged to the prominent Livonian noble family von Tiesenhausen that originated from crusader knights. Wilhelm Tyzenhauz, the former Reiter cavalry officer,[16] held Kupiškis *starostwo* (royal estate) in the Ukmergė County as a temporary possession. On August 12, 1641, he came to Kupiškis – accompanied by county court officials and a noblemen jury – to examine the case of the witch accused of witchcraft in several villages. The accused denied her guilt but after the application of torture she did not only confess to the alleged crimes, but revealed the existence of an organized witch circle consisting of men and women that gathered four times per year as magpies in the old oak tree. Thus, it was the first time when an organized unity of witches appeared in Lithuanian records. These gatherings lacked the devil's participation and any of the typical Sabbath activities like promiscuity, feasts or production of magic paraphernalia. One should keep in mind that this extravagant confession could have been directed by the questions of judges, especially Tyzenhauz. However, in this case, Tyzenhauz stopped any further interrogation about the gatherings because he got very personal information: the witch revealed who knew about the death of his children. Tyzenhauz immediately started a new investigation. One by one, he put his subjects through trial and torture. Finally, the investigation discovered – or invented – a conspiracy of a peasant family disaffected by the taking away of two of their women as nurses to the lord's residence. The peasant men plotted to kill the master's babies to relieve the women of their duties and return the wife and daughter-in-law back home. As a result, four persons obtained capital sentences and four more were released on bail under suspicion. Thus, the case is also remarkable as the first relatively mass trial and one of the largest ones recorded in Lithuania. Moreover, the active use of torture without proper justification looks extraordinary for the Lithuanian trial procedure – in fact, Tyzenhauz and his peers examined the case as *crimen exceptum*, an exceptional crime that allows for breaking normal procedures to solve an extraordinary case. While Lithuanian Statute listed witchcraft next to regular felonies, the

idea of this crime as *crimen exceptum* was widespread among Western lawyers and demonologists since the time of the *Hammer of Witches*. The number of these significant novelties suggests the prominent role of Tyzenhauz as a carrier of distinctive legal culture and the worldview features of Baltic Germans.

The patrimonial judge Wilhelm Tyzenhauz considered another case in the same place five years later, in 1646.[17] Again, the village community of Sypojnie found two women, Jadziula Jusiowa and Marta Jukniowa, as scapegoats to blame for cattle and crop failures. Without private interest, he and his peers judged the case in a regular way. However, not even torture could force these women to incriminate themselves. According to the Statute, the court should have released them and should have awarded them compensation at the expense of the losing party. Instead, the judges accepted the oath of the accusers as a closing argument and both witches were burned. Tyzenhauz did not seek a diabolic or witch conspiracy. At the same time, he was confident in the necessity of eliminating maleficent witches. The influence of his German background is even less obvious than in the previous case but it can be related to his tough uncompromising position. Possibly, the witch-beliefs of the master contributed to the peasants' enthusiasm towards witch-hunting.

In the same Kupiškis domain of the Tyzenhauzes, another witch trial occurred more than a century later, in 1746.[18] The only material surviving is the draft of the interrogation of the supposed warlock, so it contains very little information about the trial, judges, etc. The man under interrogation confessed about his and his mother's involvement in diabolism, apostasy and numerous harmful acts towards local inhabitants, their cattle and crops. The participation of the lord Tyzenhauz is unknown, but the fact that the document survived in the Tyzenhauzes' private archives suggests that the lord knew of it and, at a minimum, failed to prevent it.

One more similar case occurred in 1726 in Trakai County.[19] The judge and accuser was Edward Rydiger, a temporary possessor of the Alytus estate, a royal officer (*porucznik*), perhaps from the Prussian noble house of Ridger, whose members had moved to the service of Poland-Lithuania.[20] In a small town of the estate, Krokialaukis (Krakopol), he considered the case of a supposed witch. However, the only witchcraft activity mentioned was stealing the host used for Holy Communion: after communion, she secretly took the host from her mouth and hid it in a kerchief. By this time, at least two cases had already happened in neighboring Samogitia,[21] where host-stealing was a part of witch confessions (and two more are

known later[22]). In Germany, witch-hunts had generally faded by this time, so Edward Rydiger acted rather like a superstitious member of the Lithuanian or Polish gentry.

Jews: A dangerous business

In the earliest cases, the Jews participated not from the dock but acted as accusers denouncing Christian neighbors for causing harm through magic. Three known cases of this kind occurred in the 1630s in Slonim[23] (Navahradak voivodeship) and Halšany[24] (Ašmiany County of Vilnius voivodeship) and, a century later, in 1731, in Druja[25] (Polack voivodeship).

The witch trials of 1630 and 1731 are quite similar. In both cases, several burghers formally accused widely suspected local witches. In 1630, the Jewish pubkeeper Leyba Maiorowicz – among others – made an accusation before the Slonim city court. He accused Anna Krotka, apparently a local wise woman, of the bewitchment of his household. Anna didn't confess to harming Leyba, but suggested that it could have been an intrigue of his Christian competitor, pubkeeper Onikeiowa, who had complained about her business toils in comparison to Leyba's success. This is the first but not the only evidence of recourse to magic in economic competition. In the Druja case of 1731, economic difficulties caused the pubkeeper Szmoylo Judowicz to suspect Marcin Beynarowicz and charge him before the city court. Marcin was already widely suspected and other burghers also joined in bringing forth accusations.

The third, more extensively documented episode happened in Halšany, in 1636. The Jewish leaseholder of a pub, Hoško Eskevič, filed a complaint to the Ašmiany county court about the bewitchment of his four-year-old son. According to his story, on July 20, 1636, a group of peasants were drinking vodka in his pub, including Jurka Vajciul, who was whispered to be a sorcerer. All of a sudden, Jurka handed a glass of vodka to Hoško to greet him. The scared pubkeeper considered it a bewitchment attempt and poured out the vodka with trembling hands, which angered the drunken visitor and got him to curse. At that moment, Hoško's little son entered the room. Fearing for his life, the father remembered that beating the witch could destroy spells, so he assaulted the peasant to defend his son and apprehend the sorcerer. Jurka managed to escape but the little boy fell ill on the same day. The court official examined the sick and filled the report, but there is no information about a trial. It is possible that the son recovered and that the record was preserved as an official complaint.

While it is impossible to claim that adherents of Judaism adopted the Christian diabolic concept of witchcraft, it is evident that Jews of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania could share the general fear of bewitchment. Unlike the Jewish elite who maintained insularity towards gentiles[26], petty leaseholders that lived in the countryside or in towns without Jewish communities surrounded by local folk seemed to be more keen on cultural exchange at the borderland of two entities. It is therefore no wonder that pub-keepers who were in constant contact with customers could share local beliefs about magic, rumors towards suspected witches and their practices, public mood, fears that led to participation in witch-hunts – at least in this period of time.

It seems that Jews preferred to fix the damage rather than seek revenge in unfriendly Christian courts. The late 17th - 18th centuries saw a great rise of interest towards Kabbalah, including its practical dimension. So-called *baalshems* claimed the ability to manipulate the secret names of God for their purposes. They used occult Kabbalistic knowledge for divinations, exorcisms, amulet-making and healing.[27] It is possible that those Jews who couldn't afford to go to the acknowledged rabbi might instead refer to local folk witch doctors. Salomon Maimon (1753-1800), a German-Jewish philosopher born in present-day Belarus, narrated in his memoirs his own experience from his youth: "*It was therefore supposed that I had been bewitched at the time of the wedding; and under this supposition I was brought to a witch to be cured. She took in hand all sorts of operations, which of course had a good effect, although indirectly through the help of the imagination*".[28]

Thus the fear of witches influenced the Jewish community, with some well-integrated Jews making trial applications against commonly known local suspects. However, demands for court prosecution of the suspected perpetrators occurred relatively seldom, usually giving way to counter-magic, which was more accessible than open trial confrontation in conditions of growing insecurity and mutual incredulity.

Tatars: Magic and judicial protection

Less numerous than Jews, Tatars are very rare in the pages of witch-trial records. Only one known document reports about a Tatar accuser that put to trial a group of alleged Christian witches. In July 1759, Mustawa Baranowski, a Tatar prince (*murza*) and army colonel, requested Alytus city court to prosecute four persons (perhaps, Alytus burghers) for witchcraft

on behalf of his subjects.[29] The judges interrogated witnesses who were subjects of the colonel (perhaps the ones who have initiated the accusation) and, certain of her guilt, sent at least one woman to torture (and very likely – to the stake). That is all one can learn from the brief court record preserved. Clearly, the role of the Tatar lord was just as formal mediator between his serfs who had suffered some harm from witchcraft and the city jurisdiction over the suspects. Of course, his suit filing shows that he shared the suspicions of his subjects and felt the necessity to protect them – as did the bulk of Christian nobles of the time.

As in the Jewish case, Tatars probably preferred to fix the damage of the supposed bewitchment applied by their witch doctors (*fałdżej*). Early sources mentioned some traces of popular nomadic magic, but later *fałdżej* practices originated from learned Oriental numerology, astrology, beliefs in the power of written incantations, prayers and sacred scriptures.[30] It is possible that in earlier times they also engaged more in countering maleficent witchcraft. *Fałdżejs* engaged in magic by means of Islamic texts and prayers, so it appeared legitimate and acceptable even for the most pious patients. Thus, in contrast to the Catholic population, Tatars had a good opportunity to dampen the anxiety about witches through the assistance of counter-magic specialists.

3. The Other Accused

Jews: The sword of Damocles

In the mid-17th century, Christian-Jewish relations became tense. During the military calamities of the 1640s-1650s, Jewish communities from the eastern and southern territories of the Grand Duchy suffered assaults not only from Cossacks and Russians, but also from their local Ruthenian neighbors. In other places that avoided pogroms, tensions also rose even after the war. Court records of the time preserved accounts of many Christian-Jewish conflicts. However, in the 17th century, these tensions did not contribute significantly to witch-hunts, with barely any witch trials appearing in the records. The state and ruling elites, aiming to avoid inter-religious clashes, played a significant role in ensuring that tensions did not manifest themselves in prosecutions.

Nevertheless, the only two cases of Jews directly accused and prosecuted for witchcraft date back to this anxious time. The information

about them is pretty scarce and neither of them looks like a typical witch trial. The first case is recorded in a court book of Ašmiany county court from October 1st, 1662.[31] It was a complaint about a jailbreak filed by Hryhory Hlazka, a temporary possessor of manors Milč and Čys'c'. The Jewish pub leaseholder Szymka was accused of witchcraft and poisoning with vodka and imprisoned for trial at the patrimonial court but escaped from the manor jail. At the time, poisoning was very close or even similar to witchcraft, and bewitchment by cursed beverage was widely believed. It seems to be a very convenient way to get rid of unwanted aliens that were widely engaged in pub-keeping and brewery. However, the known sources blame Jewish pub-keepers of various wrongdoings but not of such poisonings. It can support the idea that in the epoch of the witch-hunt, Lithuanian Jews were hardly regarded as maleficent witches with related attributes and activities.

The information about the second case comes from an indirect source. On July 18, 1671, King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki promulgated an ordinance (*uniwersał*) that prescribed all state officials to uphold the rule of law in witch accusations against Jews.[32] The king strictly ordered to investigate and judge such cases in county courts, not in private ones, according to all legal procedures, not to imprison suspects before trial and not to apply arbitrary torture. As a reason for such an ordinance, the king mentioned the complaint of Jews for lawless executions of their kinfolk accused of witchcraft — as had recently happened in the Navahrudak voivodeship, where common people violently abducted and, without adherence to formalities, burned two Jewish women. From the source it is not clear whether this was a case of mob vigilantism or misconduct of some judicial body. The wording of the text leads one to suspect that other similar atrocities existed, but there is a lack of sources about them. Thus, one can assume the surge in witchcraft accusations against Jews around 1670-71 was restricted by the state's efforts.

Especially interesting is the reason for the accusations, according to the ordinance: strange inscriptions that appeared inexplicably on buildings and were attributed to Jewish sorcery. *Mahilioŭ Chronicle* also mentions the same frightening anomaly: *"In the Polish Crown and in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and in different lands and cities and in Mahilioŭ someone unknown wrote inscriptions in red curls on Catholic and Orthodox churches so high, several sążeń [Lithuanian sążeń – 1,94 m] upward, and in locked chests, that no one could these writings read"*[33].

It is possible that contemporaries saw parallels with Belshazzar's feast from the Bible and felt to be Babylonians condemned to catastrophe. These and other mentioned abnormal phenomena (or rumors about them) increased moral panic and heightened the feeling of threat from Jews. Combined with social tensions, it created a fertile ground for witch accusations and executions. However, measures taken by the authorities restricted the witch-hunt, so these two women from the Navahrudak voivodeship are the only known Jews in the Grand Duchy burned as witches.

The 18th century was notable for the significant growth of the Jewish role in the economy of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Jews not only constituted a substantial portion of urban merchants and craftsmen, but became very active in the countryside as leaseholders of estate monopolies. It was predominantly Jews who managed the transformation in the use of grain from mainly an export commodity to the production of alcoholic beverages, especially vodka, which compensated the nobility for the decrease of grain prices in Europe and decline in the efficiency of serf labor. The importance of Jews to the economy contributed considerably to their relative security and self-confidence under the patronage of magnates and the state.[34]

However, the growth of their influence antagonized peasants and petty gentry and also bothered the Catholic Church, which reinforced countermeasures. Catholic clergy insisted on following the canon law provisions about the segregation of Jews and restriction of their power over Christians by numerous limitations and prohibitions.[35] Their Orthodox colleagues tried to enforce similar restrictions as well.[36] These attempts were often ignored in practice, especially by magnates in their vast possessions.

The clergy was more effective in campaigning for the minds of people. In the first half of the 18th century, the Catholic Church launched missionary campaigns, literary attacks and the spread of blood-libel ideas. These campaigns seemed to have an effective and lasting impact, hardening the border between Catholics (Poles and Lithuanians) and Jews and resulting in a lack of integration even in the later time of secular nation-building.[37] It was perhaps an essential ideological justification for fomenting social tension that, among its impacts, also led to an increase in witch suspicions in the Catholic part of the Grand Duchy.

The religious turbulences of Judaism in the late 17th-18th centuries could have their origin in the way Jews were perceived by their neighbors.

It was the time of the rise and fall of the Sabbatean, Frankist, Hasidic movements, and the proliferation of Kabbalah mysticism, including its practical aspect – the magic of *baalshems*. The debates between all the movements spread stories about miracles and unusual powers or horrific mischief. The echo of these anxieties reached Christian common people that could hear these rumors and observe the unusual behavior of Jewish people. Together with Catholic propaganda, it could fuel fantasies about Jewish witchcraft.

Against this background, a number of cases took place in the 18th century ethnic Lithuanian lands, in which Jews began to appear in testimonies of prosecuted witches as their accomplices, but without any immediate judicial consequence. It is worth noting that, at that time, more Lithuanian cases acquired classic Western features of diabolic witchcraft: organized groups of witches, devil worshiping, Sabbaths or similar gatherings, etc. Some trials involved a relatively large number of accused and convicted people and sometimes even chain accusations took place. Investigations aimed to reveal as many local witches as possible and to use these testimonies later as evidence in case of need. From time to time, confessions included the names of Jewish neighbors in such lists of exposed accomplices.

A court of local nobility gathered in the Samogitian manor Gilvyčiai, in December 1725 to consider the case of the manor maid Krystyna caught profaning a Communion host.[38] Unexpectedly, her revelations led to one of the largest mass trials in Lithuanian history: seven females and one male were convicted and sentenced to burning. Krystyna confessed to having a pact and to having had intercourse with the devil, flying to Sabbaths, she confessed about an organized regiment of witches and named many of her associates. The lords of some revealed witches delivered their subjects to the court, starting a chain trial, one of the few of its kind in Lithuania. The majority of those named by Krystyna were serfs, but there were also several noblewomen and a Jewish woman, Szęderowa, who kept a pub in a neighboring village. However, she was mentioned only once, without any details, and her lord showed no intention to put her on trial.

As a rule, being blamed in such testimonies did not necessarily lead to immediate prosecution; but rather it ruined reputations, increased suspicions and became important evidence of guilt in case of future accusations. That was why in 1726, the Jewish leaseholder Aszarowicz sought to obtain a special document (*kwit*) and to register it in the record books of the Trakai county court.[39] The document stated that a witch named

Maryanna, burned in the town of Krokialaukis, mentioned Aszarowicz's wife among other local witches during the trial interrogation, but at the stake she withdrew her testimony. In this way, the leaseholder tried to stave off the judicial sword of Damocles over his family. The intention to get the paper could be regarded not only as a tribute to foresight and diligence, but as a reasonable precaution in light of the new attitudes of local Christians towards Jews.

Over time, the imaginary involvement of Jews in witchcraft progressed. This was reflected in one of the exceptional Western-looking mass trials that occurred in 1731, in Šerkšnėnai (Samogitia), with 11 persons accused.[40] A patrimonial trial was initiated by the fantastic testimonies of serf children about witchcraft and diabolism, including horrible details and named accomplices. It had a huge resonance and some of the participating noblemen delivered their subjects to trial. The same fate would befall the widow of Jakub the Jew, a leaseholder of Jan Wyszomerski. She was mentioned several times among members of a witch crew and Sabbath participants. Apart from Jakub's widow, at one of the Sabbaths on the Šatrija mount five other unknown Jewish men were also mentioned among common and noble Christian women. The leaseholder had the foresight to run away after being named, so the court became convinced of her guilt and ruled that her lord had to catch and try her for witchcraft.

The next step in the development of a Jewish witch image can be seen in the 1740 protocol of torture interrogation from Samogitia.[41] The accused (and almost convicted, as the court normally applied torture when it had enough evidence of guilt), peasant Jan Kolyszko, named four accomplices, including two Jewish leaseholders from neighboring villages: an unnamed woman and a man called Gierszen. Gierszen was not just a warlock, but a leader of a witch crew – *pułkownik* (colonel). It is relevant that whilst in the Western European imagination the witches' underground organization was often described in terms borrowed from anti-Jewish discourses (Sabbath, synagogue of Satan, etc.[42]), Lithuanian witches belonged to units similar to those of Cossacks or soldiers, with strict discipline and corporal punishment.[43] Other documents of this case are lost, so the reaction of judges and the consequences for the revealed witches is unknown.

At a first glance, the Jews exposed as accomplices to witchcraft possess no distinguishing features to make them stand out from other named peasants and nobles. Trial records normally do not emphasize their ethnicity or religion as related to an accusation. As for such secondary

accusations, the interrogated in their forced confessions pointed towards: 1) personal enemies or those considered as enemies of the community 2) those widely suspected of magic and witchcraft 3) those indifferent to the one on trial, for whom they felt no solidarity 4) those immune to the consequences of accusations because of their status or other reasons.[44] A Jewish leaseholder could fit any of these categories: 1) his profession could make him an enemy, 2) being the exotic Other presupposed possible magic skills, 3) as an alien often isolated from common people and indifferent to them 4) immune to assaults from common folk because of patronage by lords and authorities.

Tatars: Good neighbors in bad times

Sources contain very little information about accusations of witchcraft against Tatars. Even the most hateful text, the xenophobic pamphlet *Alfurkan Tatarski* published around 1616 in Vilnius, does not accuse this minority of maleficent magic. The author tells historical anecdotes about the application of sorcery by Mongols in battles, by Turks to return escaped captives, complaints about Muslim diviners and witch doctors in Lithuania (including a detailed story of his own experience), but never blames them of any magic sabotage or explicit diabolism.[45]

The only mention of Tatars prosecuted for witchcraft comes from an indirect and quite equivocal source. The reputed Polish historian of the early 19th century Tadeusz Czacki referred to a pamphlet named *Apologia Tatarów* (*Apology for Tatars*), published in 1630 as a response to literary attacks like *Alfurkan Tatarski*. Azulewicz, the author of *Apologia Tatarów*, indignantly reported about several Tatar women accused of witchcraft and burned at the stake somewhere in Lithuania in 1609. The evidence for their guilt consisted of suspicious coins with unreadable inscriptions. No one could read the writings, but the accusers considered them as witchcraft paraphernalia. They were, in fact, ancient Oriental coins with Kufic inscriptions in the Arabic language, highly-valued as talismans because of the name of God and verses from the Quran.[46] However, Czacki was the only one who cited this book as it was later lost.[47] Therefore, the vague terms of the cited source give no indication about the exact place, type of court, or the original accusations.

In the early 17th century, an outburst of religious fanaticism and vigilantism swept the country. First of all, it was related to the Counter-Reformation struggle against Protestants and also to the

establishment of the Greek-Catholic Church in competition with the Orthodox one. The religious polemics were accomplished by public disorders, violence and murders, assaults and plundering of churches and cemeteries. Muslims stayed out of the conflicts, but in this time they also became targets of vigilante mobs: there is some information on the wrecking of the mosque in Trakai and the burning of another one in Salkininkai (Trakai County).[48] It may be assumed that the prosecution of mentioned witches took place in the same region and was related to these events.

Thus, the sources demonstrate that Christian society believed in Tatar magic but almost never accused them of witchcraft. Most likely, the primary reason was the quite modest place of Tatars in society: they occupied specific niches (military service, gardening, particular trades as wagoners, etc.), so they normally did not compete with Christians and had few possibilities to have conflicts with them. Numerical scarcity and their low-profile roles in society attracted less the attention of the Church to these infidels, so Tatars were very seldom a target for Catholic propaganda. The Tatars relieved their own witch fears by appealing to their own witch doctors and they were tolerated by clergy and secular authorities much more than their Christian colleagues. These factors contributed greatly to the minimization of the Tatar participation in witch-hunts.

Germans: A suspicious kin

The only case of a registered accusation of a German engaging in maleficent magic is the testament of Raina Jackiewiczowa, the noble landlady from Ukmergė County, registered in county books in July, 1614.[49] Blaming a person for causing death in a testament was a kind of valuable deathbed statement and similar to registered protestation, so it could serve as important evidence in a future trial. In her testament, Raina reports about her unhappy family life with an abusive husband who cruelly beat her even when she was badly ill. She considers that the cause of the terminal illness by which she was bedridden for two years was the witchcraft of Hanz Meldon, her husband's brother-in-law. The ethnicity or other features of the otherness of Hanz are not indicated directly in the text – he was not an outsider from a segregated social group but part of the family. However, Raina supposes that the initiative to murder her came from her husband Krzysztof, who employed not a professional sorcerer or witch, but his German relative. From the text, it is not evident whether Hanz

already had a suspicious reputation as a sorcerer, whether he had practiced something that seemed odd for locals, or whether he simply obtained a magic remedy from some witch. It is possible that being German was a way of being the Other that implied a potential for magic. It is uncertain whether Raina believed in Meldon's witchcraft or just blamed him to substantiate her decision about inheritance: she bequeathed the custody of her adolescent sons and entrusted the bulk of the property to the family of her sister, not to her cruel unworthy husband. In the latter case, in order to be plausible, her accusation had to match the widespread belief of the propensity of Hanz Meldon – or of Germans in general – to use magic.

Sources keep silent about accused witches of German or other Western origins but nevertheless, the demonization of the German Other did take place. Thus, a German-looking devil is a quite common character in trial records and especially in folk materials all over Eastern Europe.[50]

Russians: The insulted and injured

In the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, only two trials are known that indicate some of the participants as Muscovite. In both cases, Russians were female captives working as servants in manors of middle gentries in Samogitia.

The first record of 1590 is very scarce and unclear.[51] It is a statement of a Samogitian court official about the following situation. Nobleman Mikolaj Martinkevič arrested a witch named Porozka Tiškovaja, a Muscovite (*moskovka* – maybe a captive from the recent Livonian War), on the estate of another nobleman, Michal Holovin, and detained her in Holovin's manor jail but left his own people to guard her. Holovin did not like such a violation of his jurisdiction so he complained and offered either to deliver her to Martinkevič's manor, or to keep her and exercise justice according to the law. It is difficult to determine whether there was a personal conflict behind the accusation or if Porozka's suspicious reputation or foreignness made it possible to attribute some misfortune to her wicked intentions; what is certain is that Russians were quite rare and exotic in this region.

Another case is much better documented.[52] On July 3, 1636, Mikolaj Syrwid invited court officials and neighboring gentry to his manor Pakėvis (Pokiiowo) in Samogitia to participate in a patrimonial witch trial. He accused his maidservant Hanna Janowna the Muscovite of witchcraft against his family and household. Hanna confessed that although she grew

up in this family, she had betrayed it by assisting in various bewitchments of her masters, their children and cattle on behalf of Syrwid's sister-in-law, Cycylia Syrwidowa. However, she did not possess any magic power or knowledge: she obtained all her magic paraphernalia from her master's sister-in-law and her daughter Zophia. The protocol of this patrimonial trial details that the court saw her as clearly guilty and she was sentenced to burning.

However, the county court trial in October of the same year against the wicked Cycylia and Zophia brought new details in Hanna's case.[53] Cycylia and her family accused Mikolaj Syrwid of false declarations in the patrimonial trial and the burning of the innocent girl. According to them, Hanna was a free subject of the Russian Tsar, captured during the Smolensk War (1632–1634). The Treaty of Polyanovka that concluded the war stipulated the return of all captives. Mikolaj promised to let Hanna go with some reward for her years of service if she helped him blame his relatives of witchcraft. After the girl had confessed before the jury, she was sentenced to death and the sentence was immediately carried out. Before burning, Hanna rejected her confessions and revealed her master's plot but it was not recorded. Eventually, the court accepted Cycylia and Zophia's testimony, but did not react to the misconduct in Hanna's case.

It is evident that Hanna became a victim because of her vulnerable position: her master was the only one able to defend her, but the master, having realized he would inevitably have to let her go, decided to sacrifice her to family intrigue. One may assume some other conflict or misconduct towards the servant girl that he wanted to hide in the fire of the stake.

Conclusion

Ethnic minorities were involved in Lithuanian witch-hunts in different roles. Notably, among the regarded samples, there are no witch cases involving two sides of the same ethnic group, although not all of them had judicial autonomy. Despite the rather high share of minority-related cases (19 out of 128, and also narrative reports), the number of those formally accused was low: only four persons (one Jew, one German, two Russians, also three trials against two Jews and some Tatars from narrative sources should be kept in mind), and even fewer faced trial and execution. As for the death toll, we learned from the analyzed records about the burning of a Russian servant in 1636 and the narrative sources add two Jewesses

around 1670 and some Tatar women in 1609. The number of convicted or even executed Jews would have been higher but for their proactive defense: obtaining a special royal decree (1671), securing documental evidence of cancelled incriminating testimonies (1726), escaping before investigation (1731) or even jailbreaks (1662). However, one should keep in mind that in some cases such a resolution could not be achieved.

On the other hand, three Jews accused (or participated in accusing) three persons, two of whom were burned. Four Germans prosecuted twelve Lithuanians in five trials, of which six ended up at the stake. One Tatar put to trial four persons with an unknown result, but at least one of them seems to have been convicted. Thus, an average minority representative was more likely a plaintiff that a defendant. In the rest of the cases, the positions of minority representatives were not so significant, but the information about them contributed to the understanding of their relation to witchcraft.

The cases discussed above provide some observations and conclusions. There was a significant difference between autonomous Jewish and Muslim minorities on the one hand, and dispersed Christian aliens on the other. The involvement in magic practices attributed to (and even practiced by) non-Christians was usually not confused with maleficent witchcraft. It supported the idea that the image of the witch corresponded to the internal enemy within the entire Christian society and within a given community or neighborhood in particular. The Other, the outsider, although living side by side but still segregated in its autonomous religious and cultural world, usually did not fit this image, with the exception of the most integrated border-crossers between two cultural realms. Therefore, the involvement in witch accusations in any role is already a marker of the integration of a particular group or individual into the local community. Additionally, non-Christian minorities were constantly under the pressure of the Catholic Church that tried to maintain a Catholic confessional state. In the course of the 17th-18th centuries, social tensions and religious propaganda would contribute to the rise of suspicions and – in the most acute situations – even violence legitimized by witch accusations. Social contradictions were crucial in the choice of whom to hate and blame, as the difference between the involvement of Jews and Tatars eloquently demonstrates. However, the protective politics of the state and especially of feudal lords normally prevented the outbursts of trial prosecution or vigilantism.

The cultural autonomy of these minorities hindered the wholesale adoption of the Western concept of diabolic witchcraft, but did not prevent

the penetration of some of its specific elements and the influence of the general fear of bewitchment. The idea of judicial revenge against the bewitcher was unpopular not least because of the evident ineffectiveness of the judicial system and the concern of discriminatory attitudes towards aliens. Instead, the supposed victim of bewitchment preferred to apply more a natural and traditional remedy: counter-magic by religious leaders or witch doctors (the border between them could be very vague). Contrary to the disciplinary attempts by the Catholic and to some extent Orthodox churches and authorities towards the Lithuanian and Ruthenian populations, Jews and Tatars tolerated or even encouraged benevolent magic in their communities. Thus, their cultural, economic and social autonomy contributed greatly to their very minor participation in the Early Modern witch-hunt.

As for Christian aliens, the situation was quite different. They normally did not belong to autonomous communities, were under the jurisdiction of the regular legislation and lived dispersedly among the local population. As Christians, they generally shared intolerant attitudes toward various types of magic and witchcraft in particular. There was a sharp distinction between Germans, who belonged to the higher social groups like the nobility or burghers, and the mentioned Russians who were mostly rural servants. Xenophobia was rarely a motivation in accusations against those Russian witches, more significant was their vulnerable social position as isolated and defenseless lower-class strangers. The cultural features behind these trials are not always obvious but did play a part. German accusations were often of a cutting-edge character for Lithuania at that time but they contained only limited elements of the witchcraft concept typical of German culture. The share of trials initiated by Germans is very small in relation to the amount and influence of their population in Lithuania. It may be that their beliefs about witchcraft, that fitted their domestic cultural and social context, were less adjustable to the quite distinctive settings of their new home country. A large proportion of these migrants came from the periphery of the German world outside the Holy Roman Empire – from Prussia and Livonia, which were much less engaged in witch persecutions. Moreover, witch burnings in German lands diminished much earlier than in Lithuania: after the middle of the 17th century, these regions became a source not of witch-hunt ideas, but of skepticism. Therefore, it is no wonder that in the 18th century only well-integrated representatives (often not from the first generation) could participate in witch trials on the same ground as the locals. Thus, while speaking about German cultural

influence on the Lithuanian witch-hunt, one should admit that the direct impact of Germans is existent but quite low.

Witch accusations did not become a common tool to resolve tensions between neighbors of different origin, as the Lithuanian society generally appeared immune to the wave of witch crazes that was sweeping through Europe. The Grand Duchy's cultural diversity, balanced approach to the Other and lack of violent systematic persecution for political and religious matters were among the factors that contributed to this immunity.

NOTES

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8 Zakrzewski, p. 86, 98-99.

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[39] *Raganų teismai Lietuvoje*, p. 68.

[40] *Raganų teismai Lietuvoje*, pp. 349-362.

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ON PERMANENT MIGRANT TEMPORARINESS: THE CASE OF MOLDOVANS IN ITALY

Abstract

In this paper, I put forward a temporal approach on migration experiences in terms of life planning. Drawing on narratives of Moldovan migrant workers in Italy, I study how temporary labour migrants co-produce, experience and make sense of prolonged temporariness. I illustrate how migration plans change over time and look into the factors determining this change. More specifically, I provide insights on how projected temporariness as a temporal horizon deeply affects one's lifestyle and crucial life decisions. I show that maintaining a temporary mindset correlates with a halting migrant behaviour in terms of time strategies. I examine how this temporariness is reflected in their everydayness, family life, qualities of time and how it affects long term decision-making in practical domains such as occupational career, access to social benefits, pension and health system. By and large, this paper addresses the time management of those who are not always in the position to "own" time, have a clear vision of what lies ahead and make informed decisions.

Keywords: labour migration, temporalities, temporary migration, temporariness, temporal horizons, migration decision making

Introduction

Moldovan migration to Italy debuted around 20 years ago and grew steadily in pace. Presently there are about 150 000 (Istat Demo 2017) regularized residents of Moldovan origin in Italy. In the aftermath of the Soviet dissolution, Moldovan society underwent a painful and slow transition to the free market which summited with a rampant economic crisis in the late 90s. Salary payments to state employees were delayed to as long as two years. Inability to cover basic living expenses pushed the bulk of Moldovans to look for work opportunities abroad. Leaving was meant to be temporary. As in Tsvetan Todorov's exemplary story,

migration presented itself as a temporary solution to a moment of crisis, an envisioned interval of time to be sacrificed for the sake of restoring the "equilibrium". The stay however, initially envisioned to last no more than one or two years, has been extended indefinitely over the years, while still cherishing return in the back of their minds. In this paper, I look into the paradoxical condition of permanent migrant temporariness, attempting to answer why do migrants overstay and how does the temporary mindset affect their decision-making and life style.

We know that return intentions strongly impact migrants' investments and notions of attachment (Carling 2014), but how does a *postponed return* materialized into a certain temporal outlook impact one's migration project? This paper aims to fill in the gap on how deliberate temporariness deeply affects one's lifestyle and crucial life decisions. I will show that Moldovan migrants fall under the condition of permanent temporariness due to an over-focus on the extended present, while seemingly losing sight of the long-run perspective. Halting as a time orientation yields permanent temporariness. Because there are many factors difficult to account for or (perceived as) outside their control, they concentrate on the current needs and aims against long term uncertain benefits (tradeoff between immediate outcomes and distant ones).

Temporary (the attribute) and temporariness (as a quality) commonly refer to an event or situation lasting for a limited period of time. In this paper, I consider temporariness not in its legal dimension, in terms of status, welfare, provisions of full rights of residence, access to services, benefits, pension schemes etc., but more as an outlook that one has for longer resettlement (Latham 2014). I conceptualize temporariness as the *anticipation* that something will end within a given time frame. Hence, I imply here that the horizon of an (imagined) temporary migrant rests upon the anticipation that he or she will return to the home country within a given time frame.

My approach rests on the assumption that migrants with temporary visions view time and their migration projects differently than those with long-term settlement plans or natives/locals (Harper & Zupida 2017, Dahinden 2016 and others). Feeling like a guest, newcomer, outsider who is on the leave (Villegas 2014) creates contrast with locals, who are the-already-settled and legally assured with citizenry. "Neither a part of nor apart from the receiving society", as Robin Harper put it (2018).

On Temporariness and its Shades or the (Inner) Contradictions of a Temporary Status

Temporariness as an ontologic outlook denotes an increasingly common contemporary condition (Adam 2008 and others) akin to non-permanency, post-modern nomadism, drifting, hanging loose, provisional life decisions, short-term vision, flexibility, open horizons, liquidity etc. *In extremis*, one can see the very act of migration as an act of breaking free from being bound to a place, and routine, as an affirmation of change and assumed temporariness (even if unreflexive, Latham 2014). At the same time, from the legal point of view, the (migrant) temporary status is linked to certain exclusions, limits and insecurities, especially when the constraints are externally imposed.

As such, temporariness can refer to subjective expectations and intentions (and a particular state of mind) or to normative constraints placed on migrants by the state (Bauböck 2011). Therefore, one should distinguish between state-imposed temporariness (as a constraint and disciplinary practice) and deliberate (migrant) temporariness as a voluntarily time-delimited act of migration. Thus temporariness may be either a perceived as a subjective status/situation or may be externally imposed by given (objective) factors, such as legal requirements. Some migrants may find visa time limitations acceptable and be willing to comply with the deadlines, while for others these may prove constraining and thus attempt to stretch the limit. In this case, their main agency is to either consent or not with the imposed temporariness (perceived as limited permanence), and break the contracts and the law (Harper and Zubida 2017, Boersma 2018). On the other hand, migrants who use(d) visa simply as a tool to cross the border, generally would ignore the time constraint and overstay, as was the case with thousands of Moldovans.

Open-endedness is a prominent feature of current forms of labour mobilities, a trend well-documented by migration scholars. This applies especially with regard to migrants with access to cheap travelling options and without legal restrictions, who generally prefer to keep their options open and flexible. Research on migration intentions, especially with regard to post-Enlargement Polish migration to the UK, has revealed that oftentimes migrants keep their plans open deliberately, maintaining the so-called 'intentional unpredictability' (Eade et al. 2007) or alternatively referenced as "deliberate indeterminacy" (McGhee et al. 2012), 'liquid migration', 'lasting temporariness' (Eade, Drinkwater, and Garapich 2007;

McGhee et al. 2012; Snel et al. 2006). Likewise, in a study on Polish migrants in the UK, Eade et al. (2007: 33–34) showed that Polish migrants have various migration strategies including single, short-term migration to earn money to be spent upon return ('hamsters'), circular migration alternating between work abroad and at home ('storks'), open-ended plans for the future ('searchers'), but also settlement ('stayers'). Furthermore, Polish migration scholars noticed a specific pattern of internal migration within Poland which they called 'incomplete migration' consisting in repeated short-term employment abroad of household members with the purpose of remitting most of the earnings back home where the costs of living are substantially lower (Okólski 2001). This migration is deemed 'incomplete' in the sense that it does not result in settlement (and in many cases, neither in return).

Scholars have complained that states operate with clear cut temporal categories with regard to migrants: permanent migrants are assumed to integrate whereas the temporary ones are expected to leave at some point (Meeus 2012:1777 quoted in Robertson 2014). From the host state perspective, the ideal migrant should conform to a continuous sequence of stages, from arrival to integration/return. Maintaining a condition of temporariness contradicts the expected linear path (or one of the paths) and when coupled with the postponement of return (which may eventually become a 'myth' – Anwar 1979) gives rise to a series of ambivalences in terms of belonging, intensity of ties to 'home' and 'abroad', diasporas and transnational spaces (Roberts 1995; Westin 1998 quoted in King et al. 2006). This suggests that migrants who overstay their initial term seemingly betray the host state's socially expected duration – to borrow a temporal concept of Merton's (1982) social structure – regarding their anticipated length of stay in the new country.

Permanent Temporariness

Bailey et al. (2002: 138) introduce the concept of 'permanent temporariness' as a strategy of resistance employed by Salvadorans under the temporary protective status[1] in the US. Salvadorans, just as Moldovans or other individuals in a legal predicament imposing specific limitations, had a selective presence in the public and careful relations with the authorities. In Bailey's et al. (2008) view, a sense of "permanent temporariness" describes both the static experience of being temporary (i.e., in suspended

legal, geographic, and social animation) and the secretion of strategies of resistance (strategic visibility) in the acquired knowledge that such temporariness is permanent. Salvadorans spoke of being "out of time" in several ways – as a shortage of time to do everything they needed to do (1), as a change in the perception of time (2), as a sense of time-space compression (3)[2].

Being trapped in a contradictory migrant condition has been described in analoguous ways by other scholars. Migrant workers in Beijing's construction industry have also been described as living in a state of "permanent temporariness," where they are neither strongly tied to their home communities nor integrated into their host communities. It has been termed as long-term temporariness by McGarrigle & Ascensão (2017) with reference to migrant workers in Lisbon. In addition, the condition of permanent temporariness is akin to what Boersma (2018) dubbed as "long lasting temporariness". She referred to the type of temporariness experienced by Filipina migrant domestic workers in Singapore, which is maintained through legal limitations, such as the requirement to extend their contracts every two years. Renewing their contracts every two years in an indeterminate loop as well as living and behaving as temporary for every two years creates a juxtaposition of the temporariness of the contract and the permanence of their situation which crucially shapes their experience (Boersma 2018).

Migrants with a "permanent temporary" status fit Vianello's (2015) category of *suspended migrants* out of the three types she identified (the other being migrants in transition and permanent migrants). Thus suspended migrants are in between permanence and migrants in passage and generally may refer to the women who have interrupted their transnational mobility in order to return to Ukraine with the intention of recovering their place in that society, but keeping migration in mind as a possible exit strategy. In another typology, permanent temporary migrants are akin to migrants in transition, similar to the Filipino migrants studied by Parrenas or the Somali studied by Decimo. These are women employed as cohabiting family assistants, middle-aged or approaching retirement age, usually divorced, widowed or single mothers (as Vianello noticed) who prefer to complete their active life in Italy to secure funds for retirement. Ann White calls them semi-settled. The quintessence of their status lies in the short-termness of their migration project, in its transitory condition, focused on a return which they keep postponing, living on the margins of Italian society. Because of their return intentions – their behavior, choices,

jobs, consumption, and lifestyles are geared toward maximum earning and not towards the improvement of their quality of life in Italy.

More strikingly, the condition of permanent temporariness is comparable to the living conditions in refugee camps. A group of artists referred to this state also as "permanent temporariness" to acknowledge the fact that what appears to be a temporary state of (e.g.) Palestinian exile has now been drawn out for 70 years, with people's lives spent stranded in limbo within the refugee camps.

Although I use the same term as Bailey et al. 2002, my approach is different. I look at this condition from the bottom-up perspective, as a manifestation of an apparently *voluntary* temporariness, manifested both in the outlook and in the migration behaviour. Drawing from and building upon growing temporal approaches on migration (Harper & Zupida 2017, Dahinden 2016, Cwerner 2001 and others), I contend that migrants with temporary visions view time and their migration projects differently than those with long-term settlement plans or natives/locals. In what follows, I aim to understand and expose what underlies this seemingly deliberate choice in status.

Fairly related to the above-described examples (Bailey et al. 2002, Boersma 2018), in Moldovans' case, limitations arise from the need to renew their residence permits and the unpredictability of their employment contracts, which can cease anytime (in general they depend on the health of the person they take care of or on the dynamic of the relationship with the employer). These legal factors create a mix of uncertainty and fixity, which dialectically defines their outlook. Moreover, more unpredictability (and openness) is added in the cases of informal work arrangements, which largely persist.

Why Migrants Prolong their Stay? Factors Elicited by Previous Research

Discrepancy between planned and actual return is not a novelty in migration research. Migration aims are varying, complex and often entail mixed and dynamic motivations. By referring to the guest program launched by the German government in the 60s, Castles (2014) emphasizes the dynamic, ever-changing nature of migrant motivations and aims. In the German case, both government and migrants agreed on a temporary plan. Guest workers in Germany worked hard and lived frugally in order

to save enough to improve the livelihoods of the family back home, for example sustaining the family farm, starting a small business, or just by improving their housing, education, health care and nutrition. Intended temporariness was a coping mechanism for migrants also because it helped them avoid facing up the idea of permanent settlement. However, for reasons or factors beyond the control of migrants or the prevention mechanisms of government, migrants do change their original objectives.

What are the factors that lead them to change their goals? Structural factors such as an unsatisfactory political and economic situation in the home environment can keep migrants in a continuous state of indeterminacy and suspended plans. For example, Turkish migrants were deterred from return by the political turmoil (the 1980 military coup) and the unstable economic environment in the home country. Among other factors affecting settlement or re-migration plans, as revealed by previous research, are socio-economic and demographic variables such as relationship status, children, length of stay or employment among others (Janta 2013; McGhee, Travena, and Heath 2015; Ryan 2015; White 2011), as well as the level of social integration and transnationalism (de Haas and Fokkema 2011). Civil status (married or not) and children are essential factors in migrant decision making. Quantitative studies show that involvement in transnational activities significantly reduced the chances of migrants wanting to settle permanently, while age and the level of socio-cultural integration significantly increased their intention to settle. The influence of gender, education and socio-economic status produced mixed results, while labour market participation seemed not to have any influence on migrants' plans (Snel et al. 2015). Drinkwater and Garapich (2015) looked into the migration strategies of Poles in the UK and developed a typology of Polish migrants in light of their planned stay in the UK, factoring in changes in their intentions over time and showing that the length of stay in the UK determines whether migrants change their intentions.

A more general factor relates to life-course. Castles (2014) uses the example of Turkish migrants in Germany who were mostly young and planned to be away for only a few years. The portrait of the Turkish migrant cohort he draws in simple words applies well to the Moldovan case: "They had been attracted by higher wages in Western Europe, but had not been informed about high living costs and tax and social insurance contributions. Saving was much slower than expected. It might be acceptable to live frugally in a migrant workers' hostel for a few years,

but as time went on, people wanted to live with their spouses and children. Family reunification and formation – and life itself – got under way. Once migrants' children went to school and began to speak German (or French or Dutch) better than their parents' languages, parents realised that if they went home, their children might not come with them. Since giving a better future to their children was a powerful motivation for migration, the idea of seeing the family dissolve was to be avoided at all costs: many parents began to realise that their future lay in the new country." (Castles 2014)

In the case of Eastern European migrant domestic workers in Italy, based on my own observations corroborated with previous research (Vianello 2015, Ambrosini 2012, Marchetti and Venturini 2013), I can derive two prevailing reasons for protracted migration. First, their earnings became essential for the family to preserve the social status and the new living standards. Secondly, migrants themselves change, as well as their sense of personality, values, aspirations and identity. New goals appear, ties rarefy, priorities become obsolete until they find themselves suspended between two worlds, sitting in two boats at the same time.

Why Moldovans Stay Longer? A Hesitant Dive into Moldovan Permanent Temporariness

"We came for a year or two" – first years of temporariness

One certain feature of Moldovan migration to Italy – as mentioned already – lies in its intended temporariness. The first migrants from Moldova started to arrive in mid '90s-2000s and they envisioned their stay to last no longer than two or three years. That is why, almost invariably, most of my interlocutors emphasized the imagined short duration of their migration project:

> We came for a year, like anyone else (…) but one year turned into 15 (Tamara, mid 50s)

> The majority of us left with the thought that we would be back home in a year or two. (...) I stopped counting the days and years, because it was a torture but I have never ceased to think of my return (Olia, 35 years old)

The majority of pioneer Moldovan migrants, who arrived to Italy between mid90s and 2005, experienced a period of being undocumented[3] until they could regularize their status. Strategic waiting for one of the amnesty sessions granted by the Italian government (2006, 2008) was crucial in accessing legality by obtaining the stay permit (permesso di soggiorno). They found jobs in cleaning or care work by word of mouth and recommendations circulated in trusted circles, avoiding placement agencies[4].

The participants in my study would refer to the post-arrival period as crucial in determining the aftermath of their migration course. They would often invoke a sense of urgency in those early days, which instilled the awareness that every minute counts and each jobless day equals loss of money. Pressure was added by the need to pay the debts incurred by migration as fast as possible, hence finding a job as soon as possible was a priority. Once beholding a job, work became the main reason of their stay in Italy, rendering other spheres of life in the host country secondary. Only after the payment of debts, which took on average from one year to two years, could they consider the start of their migration chapter. They would finally feel they start earning for themselves and for their own profit or needs.

For those who could not regularize their stay in the first years, the fear of being detected by authorities precluded them from going out of the household very often. Leisure and time off were a luxury they could not afford. During the first years, Sunday was just a regular weekday – "I did not know what a Sunday meant", Larisa (65 yo) told me, when reflecting retrospectively on her first years in Italy.

Admittedly, the pioneer period abounds in hardships and moments of doubt, which enhance the feeling of temporariness, as shown by the quotes below:

> You may get to this point when nobody understands you and you do not understand their language, so you reach this critical phase when you seriously question everything: Should I maybe go back home? Because there somehow, I won't die of hunger. This phase takes 2-3 months until you begin to understand the language, until you get used to their food. (Trofim, 45 years old)

> You find yourself wondering, who the hell brought you here and what are you looking for? But you know you do not have time to fuss about it,

you have to do something. You have responsibilities, you have mouths to feed. (Lena, 50 years old)

I felt very badly when I got here and I said to myself: I'm going to look for work, pay off my debt and get back home and live as I used to live. (Olia, 35 years old)

The pioneers extended this initial limit mostly due to legal status issues. Once crossing the border illegally or overstaying their visa allowed time, they ended up as undocumented or irregular residents. Surviving or fulfilling their migration aim depended on strategic waiting for one of the regularisation sessions granted by the Italian government (2002, 2006, 2008, 2009), which meant the chance to regularize their status and the possibility to travel between the two countries. Once regularized, they were able to pay for their first visit home. Regularization and first homecoming in the case of many functioned as a reality check, which determined a revision of migration aims (or planned length of stay) and potentially a change of path, an outlook more oriented towards a longer stay. Some might have decided to return for good, content with their savings up to that point. Many more instead decided to return to Italy after a first visit home, either for good (with settlement plans in mind) or for just a little longer.

The Indefinite Return – Postponing Factors

Understandably, when one family member decides to look for a job abroad, the period of separation is envisioned as short or time-fixed, especially if the transfer of the whole household (family reunification) on the long term is not in the cards. All the same, as I have showed in earlier sections, migration decisions are not static or set in stone, but rather prone to revisions. Moreover, migration itself as a process is a dynamic one and one's migrant status can undergo a series of transitions and transformations: from undocumented to documented, from temporary to settled, from settled to returnee etc. Individuals are in a constant re-orientation as a result of ever-changing life situations. Migrants' aims and aspirations evolve too; these can turn from a decision taken out of desperation and lack of alternatives, to a stated preference towards a change of lifestyle (Kloc-Nowak 2018, Odermatt 2016).

Some of my conversations with intended temporary Moldovan migrants confirmed these postulations. My interlocutors would keep a light-hearted and relaxed view on planning per se and commonly reference idioms of popular wisdom to acknowledge the volatility of planning: "*There is this saying: don't count your chickens (before they are hatched)*"[5] or *"things never turn out as planned*." (Ion, in his 40s)

Commonly, prolonged temporariness is grounded in a misevaluation of the initial period of separation or of the amount of time needed to achieve migration aims. For instance, Marina – a woman in her forties, with a stable clerk job, appreciated by colleagues and with a generally satisfactory family income by local standards - took on the possibility of leaving Moldova as a joke, to punish her husband after a family argument. She planned to take off just a month from work, but when she had notified her employer about the expected length of absence, he warned her that one-month might be an underestimation. Some 15 years later, she still jokes about her hypothetical return, but year-by-year she prolongs her stay a bit more, moving the "deadline" a bit further.

Likewise, when Alina decided to come to Italy, she took off only three months from work, presuming she would be back shortly. Three months turned into 10 years and counting, as a series of developments rendered the idea of "homecoming" more and more vague. In her fifties at the time of the interview, Alina was looking up to her retirement as a potential return date.

Olia came to Italy in order to secure funds for the renovation of her parents-in-law's house. Her initial planning included a step-by-step plan until full completion, in accordance with the savings she could provide monthly. "*I told him* [her husband] *that after we finish the bathroom, we move on to renovate our daughter's room".* However, expenses continued to add up: "*Last fall when I went home, planning to renovate my girl's room, I thought I have enough money. Eventually my husband decided against it and then the holidays came and they require a lot of spending, no? And money doesn't grow on trees.*"

In most cases and as illustrated by the quote above, financial constraints seem to keep in place those yearning for return; "*I want to go home. We all want to go home. But with the income we have here.*" (Mari, in her fifties); *"I have a relative who always laments that she doesn't like it here and then she goes home and spends all her money and after that, she comes back. She forgets all the anger, all the ills, she can even get into*

depression, but she comes back to the mine, to Gestapo"[6], Artur (32) cynically remarks.

Michael Piore (1979) argues that the imagined temporariness of new migrants' possibly means that at the earlier stages of a migrant's immigration career they have lower subjective expectations, less language and more limited understanding of the labour market. Hence they are more likely to view work instrumentally (quoted in Anderson, 2013:82). In time the available resources and the already-made investments render departure costly. Once they acquire capital and skills, they are tempted by the idea of gaining more earnings at smaller costs, as is proved by Lena's account below. Her testimony evidences how adaptation efforts such as acquiring skills, social and financial capital as well the social adjustments needed for the move likely lead to a revision of plans, usually to a prolongation of the stay.

> With 700 euros a month, it took time to pay off my debt. And by saving and putting money aside, gradually, I learnt the language, I got used to being here, and this is how I stayed…to help my kids. (Lena, in her fifties)

However, the multiplication of financial needs is not the only constraint holding migrants back from returning. Mircea (in his mid60s) dismisses earnings as a purpose per se: "*We can go home even tomorrow. I often say, as we arrived here only with just a passport in our pockets, so we can go back*". Yet the reasons he does not act on this principle are intertwined with a complex family situation. Upset that his siblings have sold the parents' house where he had hoped to settle as well as an ensuing request for divorce from his ex-wife, determined him to gear towards building a new livelihood in Italy.

Leaving children behind is the most recurrent trope and the highest emotional cost of their migration project and usually the same reason that determines them to prolong their stay: to secure more funds for their sake. The implicit aim is to endow them with better life opportunities and avoid them having the same trajectory. Many of my interlocutors, mothers away from their children, would spend a fair amount of time praising them because they "did not cause any trouble" which is the most feared concern of leaving mothers. Yet, it is not uncommon that upon graduation because of scarce job opportunities in Moldova, some children (esp. daughters) join their mothers in Italy and take up, ironically, the same job[7]. The usual trap they fall into is the same illusory temporariness, that

this is a job undertaken for the time being out of convenience until they find something better.

Bringing children to Italy is one of the strongest signals in the likelihood of long-term settlement. Those who managed to enroll their children in Italian schools, after a few years ponder about return with even less easiness. They realize that their children would be significantly affected and probably less enthusiastic about changing locations again. In many cases, children would resolutely dismiss return and parents have to comply with them.

Representative in this regard is Viorica's case. Her husband joined her in Italy after one year and a few years later they managed to bring their two children and enroll them in an Italian school. Despite difficult years in which the children struggled to adapt and make friends at school, when asked about a possible return, they ruled out this option, being strongly in favor of staying in Italy.

Looking forward to reaching a target in time (until which major life revisions are frozen or suspended) is one of the common techniques of future planning, be it a significant personal event (e.g.: until the daughter gets married, until graduation, until retirement, until the house renovation is complete etc.) or an externally imposed deadline such as the expiration of their residence permit or employment contract. However, if the chance for renewed employment arises, few of them would turn it down. For women nearing retirement, reaching the eligible age for Moldovan/ Romanian/Italian pension represents a milestone, but even this migration deadline is negotiable and pushed further for the sake of increased savings. They continue to work as long as they are physically able, despite advanced age (sometimes the difference between them and their elderly cared person is less than 5-10 years). The ideal type of retirement and reward/compensation for the 20-year hard work for *doamna* Nastia was going back to Moldova, buying a small house with a garden and receiving regular visits from her daughter and granddaughter for whom she would cook their favourite food. The prospect of this rewarding time in the future boosts her motivation to carry on.

For care workers, the duration of their contract/work agreement depended on the life expectancy of the person they assisted, which was hard to predict. Thus employment could end abruptly or extend indefinitely. A cynical anecdote circulates amongst migrants with regards to this: Purportedly, when one hears ambulances on the streets of Padua, they say: "another Moldovan is left jobless…", hinting that another elderly

person had died. According to the contract, the family assistant is offered compensation and allowed to stay in the household for a certain period upon the sudden interruption of the contract. In practice though, I heard of many situations when women were asked to leave the household immediately after the death of their dependent, putting them in the abrupt situation to urgently find a home and a new job. Therefore, the prospect of sudden death can cause a lot of anxiety.

> As long as she (the elderly care receiver) is alive, I have a job. But who knows for how long that is. Sometimes I think of my job as someone seeing people out of life. I saw off from life 3 lives so far. I stay with them to the end, if I can take it. (Olia, mid 30s)

As it has been noted, extending labour age is perceived as an investment. Ageing migrants help their children as long as they are capable hoping they will be helped in exchange. For instance, doamna Nastia (mid 60s) took on the mission to support her daughter and pay the expenses of her granddaughter studying in Germany, remitting at least 1000 EUR per month. She found accomplishment in securing her granddaughter a better prospect and takes great pride in her school achievements.

Often staying is motivated due to needs of trustworthy and affordable healthcare. Few examples are telling. Rodica has two more years until she reaches retirement age and some health issues. She has made a point in retaining her job in part-time regime even if sick in order to be able to access the Italian healthcare and services after retirement. Despite some general dissatisfactions related to her life in Italy, Ala (in her 40s) had a strong foothold on staying because of the expensive treatment she was dependent on, and which was provided at an affordable price only in Italy. Ala was struck by a hereditary bone disease, which she discovered while being in Italy and required highly costly treatment, otherwise unavailable in Moldova. She confessed that only thanks to her access to Italian healthcare was she able to keep the illness under control. Even a middle range income in Moldova wouldn't have allowed her to pay the expensive medicines she needed to take monthly, amounting to almost 1,000 EUR a month.

In a similar vein, one of my interviewees came to Italy because his daughter needed specific medical treatment and decided to settle after they were granted access to healthcare.

Fear of having "nothing to do at home", not finding a further source of income, potential deskilling, not being able to return to their pre-migration jobs and reintegrate in the local labour market after this prolonged absence also deters them from making immediate return plans. "I don't even dare to return to my old job".

What's more, the return, even if kept as a nostalgic thought in the back of their mind, is discouraged by other migrants' failed return initiatives ("we were afraid to make the same mistakes as others"). Stories circulate amongst migrants about those who returned home with savings, had business plans, tried several times to implement them but failed with huge losses. A common pattern in the case of these disillusioned returnees was to return to Italy with firmer intentions for settlement. Rumors about these "unsuccessful return cases" passed around in migrant circles, serving as a cautionary tale for those still harboring business projects, like in the quotes below.

> Many say "I'll go home and I'm not coming back", and in a year or two – you see them back. When they finish their savings, they come back.

> A friend of mine went home. She had invested all her savings in her son, and the boy managed to accomplish nothing and from all the sorrow she had endured this 45-year woman got paralyzed and could not return to Italy. (Mari)

All in all, reflecting the factors revealed by previous migration scholarship, Moldovans' motivations to overstay their initial length are heterogeneous bound by intimate reasonings and structural factors altogether. Amongst the macro considerations, my interviewees would commonly invoke their overall disappointment with the unstable economic climate and political developments in the home country. During interviews, my interviewees would go to great lengths to criticize the degrading political climate, the low wages and pensions, as well as the corrupt healthcare system in their country of origin and to systematically compare the two environments. But to my view, these macro commentaries about structural deterrents were laid rather as a mere background canvas upon which they articulated their own intimate life considerations. Complaints about large factors outside their control constituted rather a warm up introduction before they arrived at seemingly more burning and heartfelt reasons for their drifting condition. Since the majority of my

interviewees were middle-aged married women with family members left in the home country, family situation and children's future appeared as the essential factors that shaped their migration aims. While the economic needs ranked high in most of the narratives and are obviously derived from structural factors, they were ultimately linked and subsumed to socially expected (and self-perceived) norms and expectations.

How does Temporary Mindset Affect their Trajectory?

A temporary mindset is closely connected to the practice of "halting" (Griffiths et al. 2013). Halting in time implies that, on the whole, there is hardly any long-term vision on the actual duration of their stay abroad. Each day is taken as such, time is organized in portions, with dividers such as when is the next visit home, how many days left until Easter, Christmas, summer annual leave, weekly packages sent home through the minivan and hence shopping required for that, phone calls, planned expenses etc. Because there are many factors difficult to account for or (perceived as) outside their control, my interviewees seemed to concentrate on the immediate (constantly arising new) needs against long-term uncertain benefits (trade off between instant outcomes and distant ones).

At the same time, along with this enforced present orientation, comes a side futuring attitude in the way temporary precarious migrants seem to defer gratification to a later life stage, once the migration chapter is complete. When one is set to leave, they do not tend to capitalize on the present, but confide in an elusive but yet rewarding future. Frances Pine sympathetically wrote how essentially migration is an enactment of hope (2006), mostly in a better life projected somewhere in the future. Migrants endure bad times governed by the hope in better times: "I am not well now but I will be better in the future".

Temporary mindset translates in a constant yearning to be somewhere else, craving for belonging to a lost home to which they hope to return in an indefinite future. Being homesick can be understood as a temporal longing, that of being temporally anchored to home while being physically present in the new country. Interviews showed that home-related timescapes held primacy in migrants' mindsets, especially those not fully accommodated or oriented in the new context. They seemed to live a double life simultaneously: physically present here, but mentally

holding onto the home timescapes, or one could say a double absence in Sayad's sense (2004).

Return intentions affect investments in social contacts, skills and assets (Carling and Pettersen 2014, de Haas & Fokkema 2011). Temporary labor migrants seem stuck in short term jobs, secondary market positions marked by instability, no real prospects for career advancement and modest returns in terms of professional satisfaction. The majority of Eastern European women found jobs in the domestic care field, while men undertook jobs in services, construction, gardening etc. Taking up jobs, which do not match their previous professional background, or below their qualifications results in professional deskilling, social devaluation and perceived downgrade of social status. Temporary mindset allows for maintaining an unsatisfying occupation as they think this is only for the time being and for the sake of earnings. These jobs often imply working antisocial, weird temporal rhythms avoided by the mainstream society, such as (live-in) domestic work or nightshift positions. Thus spatial isolation can be doubled by temporal segregation.

Saving Money, Spending Time

Acting as temporary mainly translates to extensive saving. Olia recounted how she avoided any expense in order to save every penny,e.g. walking instead of taking the bus. This resonates with what Heintz (2004) wrote about Romanian time valuations remnant of the socialist era, giving the example of grocery shoppers who would be willing to spend their entire day fishing for the best prices in various markets across Bucharest. The capitalist view on time sees it as a resource quantified in money and the one hour spent travelling to the market which sells cheaper tomatoes can be more profitable if spent in the office working and producing more money than the few pennies saved. However individuals from lower social strata have fewer means to make their own time so profitable. Thus their own time seems less valuable against the limited monetary resources they have. This is why Olia was more eager to give up an important portion of her free time than pay the price of a bus ticket: *"As if I wouldn't exist. I would walk long distances just to save one bus ticket. 3 euro for me was almost a phone card."* A phone card was the essential tool to ensure weekly communication and checkups with her family, which for her was an utmost priority.

The ever-postponed return takes the form of an ambiguous and permanently provisional status. For instance, Mircea in his 60s did not apply for Italian citizenship after 10 years of legal residence which would have made him eligible to do so, based on the firm belief that he will return to Moldova. He changed his plans when he married a fellow countrywoman in Italy and understood he has to settle down and so he realised retrospectively that Italian citizenship would have served him well.

Migrants in transition do not invest energy in being more socially present (included, integrated), such as taking part in leisure activities, sports, or going out with fellow Italians, consolidating bonds over dinners and evening drinks etc. Out of convenience, they tend to maintain conviviality with fellow countrywomen. In acute isolation from their core/reference group, temporary migrants look for temporary substitutes for family, however these bonds tend to be occasionally made, sporadically maintained and as such, rarely crystallize into something reliable, as Rina told me.

Protracted separation takes a toll on transnational families and couples: some women would ruefully note that family ties were becoming looser and spouses could become estranged from each other. Their stay abroad is perceived as a short intermezzo, instrumental to the accomplishment of family interests. A series of limiting factors contribute to this: maternal duties, family expectations, economic insecurity and the suffocating job of being a caregiver. Some migrants avoid serious relationships or getting married until their status is secure, meaning they remain unmarried longer than socially expected.

For comparison, migrants who nurture plans for settlement are more likely to invest in personal fulfillment, work towards the reunification of the entire family in Italy or on the contrary, evade family and community constraints and undertake a new life in Italy. They are "futuring" in the sense that they do not hold an ambivalent time orientation; they are temporally emplaced in one context (Italy) and committed to link their future to it. They may be more willing to put effort in learning Italian, widen their social network and find a more flexible or satisfying job.

Temporary residence in a foreign country equates with experimenting with different lifestyles for a number of years. During this fixed interval from life one can lead a different life style from the one they had in the home country. Being in the same environment as locals sets the premise of living a life like they do. Moldovans just like other migrants on the territory of Italy can reproduce significant aspects of Italian everydayness

in their existence. They can live like Italians do (although not quite): cooking Italian dishes with local products, strolling Italian streets, admiring the Italian architecture, consuming the cultural offer in terms of arts and music, imitation of habits (the aperitivo practice, internalizing the coffee culture, eating pasta daily, sporty style of clothing). As few respondents told me: "It's a sin to be in Italy and not enjoy this beauty and learn from this culture" (although in terms o leisure this is not always the case, as I have explained elsewhere). Migrancy represents a given time in which they can enact a different lifestyle, imitate or borrow somebody else's habits or daily routine, due to the fact that they share the same environment and given resources, even if excluded from citizenship rights, benefits and obligations.

This implies the possibility of living like an Italian, nevertheless a marginal one, for migrants tend to embody a quiet and almost invisible presence, who can justify their role primarily through the service they deliver or usefulness to the host society. As a migrant, they live this life for a set period of time, like in an existential experiment. If in the host country they are *stranieri*, "intimate strangers" as Parrenas calls them, citizenshipless contributors etc., back in the home country they are referred to as "the Italians". Every year in August, the month of the year when most of them come to Moldova for their annual leave, one can read such headlines in the media as "the Italians are coming".

Personal well-being is a domain which is significantly affected as they tend to neglect their own needs and deprive themselves of any gratification. Assumed precariousness is perceived like a necessary investment to improve future prospects, their status in the future. "I suffer now so that I can be better in the future."

While investing in improving the comfort of their homes in the origin country, temporary labour migrants tend to live in transient homes, makeshifts, tight spaces, where they can enjoy little privacy or comfort. This is even more symbolic when we reflect on the meaning of the word "home", a term that is similar in both Italian and Romanian: "acasă"/"acasa". "Acasă" for Romanian natives denominates a topographic wholeness in which the alienated self seeks comfort. That the original "acasă" is still the site that incites belonging and wellbeing to them is apparent by the way they use this term in their daily vocabulary. It is *that* "acasă" in the origin country that they keep thinking of, that they crave for and look forward to returning to. When a place is kept as temporary and does not arouse a sense of belonging, the body feels displaced, still

craving for a home that is elsewhere[8]. No wonder the trope of the foreigner is a recurrent one in their narratives:

> Here no matter how well you do your job, you're still a *straniera*, the foreigner. You are not at home and you know, sometimes you stay with the family and they begin to say...[bad things about migrants, like discussing the news] without realizing and I feel bad (Lena, in her fifties)

According to transnational theory, migrants secure their return by actively engaging in transnational practices such as keeping regular contact and investments in the origin country. Maintaining ties with the remaining family in the home country by phone or through the internet, sending money and regular packages, investments can be interpreted as a strategy to secure return (make sure that they have something to come back to) and commit to the idea of homecoming.

Most strikingly, building a home in the home country is a binding engagement to return one day, an assertion of commitment to maintain ties with the origin country (Boccagni). Investing in a home in the origin country is a tool for migrant prestige and community embeddedness, as well as to show that their migration project is successful and meaningful, that their departure and separation from family is not without benefit. Paolo Boccagni (2017) compared Ecuadorians' houses in Italy with those in the home country and found stark differences. Their temporary home in Italy looked impersonal, anonymous and basic domestic spaces, which starkly contrasted with the flamboyant, often unfinished big houses in Ecuador (also being quite distinguishable from other locals' buildings). The same can be said about the "migrant houses" of Ukrainians, Moldovans or Romanians in their home countries. In Romania they are called "case *făloase*" (>boastful houses), an adjective that is meant to express both the pride and prosperity that these houses stand for.

> We renovated our house but we go there once a year, no one lives there. A home needs a soul, someone to live there, to enter and exit it. (Trofim, in his forties)

Doamna Liusea worked hard for 13 years to build two houses in Moldova "pretty, with a yard, cellar and vineyard, as it is customary in our country. I built them so that we have a place to go to". However, shortly before our meeting doamna Liusea had been diagnosed with a terminal

disease and came at the sad realization that she won't be able to have the peaceful retirement age she dreamed of for so long. She decided to stay longer in Italy instead so that she can benefit from better quality and more accessible health services.

Remittances and investments are resolute indicators to understand the extent of migrant engagement with their country of origin. The prospect of return is closely connected with the financial investments they make, either as remittances or material/properties acquisitions/purchases. To understand the magnitude of the engagement of Moldovan migrants with the home country and temporariness of their stay abroad, it would suffice to look at the regular amounts of money they send. Migrant remittances amount to at least 10% of Moldova's GDP which makes the national economy completely dependent on external money inflows.

An informative account was given by Trofim who explained why he and his wife chose not to invest hugely in home renovation or property purchases in Moldova, based on other friends' experience:

> We saw what our friends did. How they invested thousands of euros in renovating their homes. One year passes, 2, 3, no one lives there, everything gets ruined. Money spent in vain. They set one single aim: to earn money. And then foolishly invest it. I have a friend: I will build a nice house in Moldova. Why?, I ask. On the one hand, one spends a fortune on the paperwork required to bring their family to Italy, on the other hand they invest money in a house in which they don't know whether they will ever get to live. The poor guy invested around 100.000 euro in that house to find it in ruins and then sell it for a ridiculously low price. And then borrow money from the bank again, because his family is in Italy and you cannot pay rent forever.

This quotation, like others, is indicative of the ambivalent position of migrants feeling split between investing in Italy and in Moldova.

As time spent away from home progresses, the idea of return is pushed to the back of their mind, rather as an abstract notion one still holds on to out of inertia. A common scenario is that after investing in a major purchase of property (flat, house etc.) in Moldova, the shift in settlement plans is signaled by the decision to buy a property in Italy. Buying a home in the host country is the first clear indicator that settlement is an attainable aim. For instance, after paying rent for years, Trofim's family decided to risk taking a bank loan to purchase an apartment. Even if, as he said, he

could sell the flat if he changed his mind, having his own place in Italy constituted a firm anchor.

> I said, "Wait a minute, are we going to go back tomorrow, the day after tomorrow?" No. So, if it is possible, if the Italian state gives us money, then why don't we take the risk too? (Trofim, in his forties)

Maintaining return intentions in Zoe's case proved to be detrimental to her savings. She put money aside for 6 years and invested in a new flat in Chișinău, which she furnished and decorated to her taste. The flat had lied empty for years until she decided to resell it, for an ostensibly lower price. When I asked her why had she not offered it for rental while she had been away, she candidly replied, "I wanted it to wait ready for my arrival".

When in difficulty to assess the current status and have a clear future vision, maintaining a temporary mindset might be a coping mechanism. "We were calm because we were sure we'd go back soon". Moreover, when prospects are dim, acting as temporary may seem strategic. Being displaced on a temporary basis makes the situation more bearable and allows for making various concessions. The perceived loss of social status and recognition due to a mismatch between one's occupation background and higher education and the socially stigmatized unqualified domestic work (Vianello 2009) is easier to cope with when knowing that this occurs outside the reference group and on a short term. However, drifting comes at a cost, especially when making major life decisions. Without a time frame or anticipated future to work towards, people can struggle to cope, and find it difficult to make any progress or invest in themselves.

Many of these migrants are caught in a trap, suspended between worlds. As time passes, as children grow, new needs arise and migration earnings are gradually spent for the realization of continuous aims. Needs multiply, life circumstances change, horizons expand and thus tens of thousands of Eastern European migrants (Moldovan, Romanian, Ukrainian) postpone departure on an indefinite term, in order to secure extra savings to help their extended family in most cases. Temporariness manifests in the inertia with which they continue to enact their goal-oriented behavior at the outset of the migration project, even if not with the same intensity, e.g.: send money and weekly packages, renovate their house from the distance, help relatives, maintain strong ties, stay involved in diasporic activities and charity actions. For some women, feeling still "unsettled" is conditioned by the continuous shift between the anticipation of leaving and staying on as

domestic workers for an indeterminate period. Economically, permanent temporariness translates into more willingness to accept irregular forms of employment such as informal agreements with the employer. These arrangements imply a bigger monthly pay but exclude contract-based social contributions. Migrants are lured into the prospect of earning more on the short term, but not having a formalized contractual employment is detrimental in the long run. Furthermore, they tend to invest the bulk of their savings in the home country: renovating an old house, buying a new property, which devaluate or wear off in time, as years pass by.

Concluding Remarks - One Day at a Time

How does one hold on to the imaginary of a better future? How does one keep himself grounded and motivated to pursue a given aim in psychologically demanding circumstances? Unlike previous approaches to similar migrant conditions (Bailey et al. 2002, Griffiths et al. 2013, etc.) which addressed permanent temporariness as a limitative legal provision (that is externally/state-imposed), I adopted the microscale perspective and treated this condition as a deliberate outlook on future making. I show that the paradoxical status of permanent temporariness is rather a collateral outcome of what can look like a short-sighted time orientation.

Halting in a stagnant present underlies the paradoxical condition of permanent temporariness. It is paradoxical because while it denotes a future orientation, it is anchored in a continuous present. Why continuous, because it is constantly extended, portion by portion, as in a step by step algorithm but which looks more like stepping on the same ground, not advancing. It betrays in fact a short term vision, be it a deliberate or unintentional one. The essence of permanent temporariness lies in its liminality: migrants who neither settle, nor return. They do not return immediately because of discouraging factors: a degrading political environment in the home country, rising family needs and expenses, deskilling, advanced age etc. They do not settle down because of advanced age, poor integration efforts, separation from family, to list just a few reasons.

Admittedly, the present orientation of temporary labour migrants is not surprising or fairly paradoxical. When in difficulty to assess the current status and have a clear future vision, maintaining a temporary mindset might be a coping mechanism. The short-term future is more manageable,

while planning needs to take the issues one by one, as they arise. Halting reflects a way of thinking in small chunks or even day units. "I will stay here until I won't (as long as I can)" a typical answer I would be given, when inquiring about the prospects of return. Borrowing from Griffiths et al. 2013, I understood this tactic of conduct as "halting" in which one places themselves in an elongated present, endured in chunks, hoping to finally connect the dots to the much aspired bettered future they strive towards.

However, this permanent temporariness condition might affect key migration decisions, resulting, for instance, in extensive saving, poor social integration, limited leisure and professional deskilling. For some women, feeling still "unsettled" is conditioned by the continuous shift between anticipation of leaving and staying on as domestic workers for an indeterminate period. Economically, permanent temporariness translates into more willingness to accept irregular forms of employment such as informal agreements with the employer.

One can hardly make informed decisions before migrating about how long it would be necessary to stay abroad to fulfill their migration goals. Intentions materialized in a certain temporal outlook do not equal with the actual behavior but they are significant in their own right. Permanent temporary migrants behave as prospective returnees on a settler's basis, even if their behavior suggests/predicts return. By prolonging their stay, they decrease the likelihood of return, however still behaving as temporary. Migrants are inconsistent with their intention to return possibly because they discount the losses in the long run. When facing a decision to return, they consider that one more year or two won't do much harm, as in their understanding the short term benefits (more money) outweigh the long-term losses (pension schemes, time spent away from family, alienation etc.)

This points to the need to consider decision making in its dynamism, i.e. treat intentions at the outset of the migration project not as a fixed/static motivation but an ongoing mindset subject to revisions all throughout the experience of migration, also due to arising opportunities or constraints on the way. Actual return does not represent the ending point that renders the migration chapter over. Homecoming can take many forms and effects: it can be beneficial or not, it depends on the case and individual calculations. Migrants are in a constant negotiation of home, belonging and personal change.

NOTES

1 TPS granted selected foreign-born groups temporary residence status and temporary access to employment. It carried no promises or guarantees of asylum, permanent residence, or citizenship. In practice, many stay (Bailey et al. 2002).

2 In their argumentation, permanent temporariness is rather exerted by the state on individuals and it serves to promote the interests of state and capital. The production and reproduction of permanent temporariness disorients and divides groups with potentially common goals and needs (e.g., the lack of any pan-Latino political movement or organization in the area). However, the fluid, chameleon-like nature of permanent temporariness also offers opportunities for resistance (Shields 1999, 183–84). This implies pursuing "permanence" through alternative means meant to secure lasting ties such as educational investments in the second generation, marriage, and even refusing to leave the U.S. by going underground.

3 By irregular I mean either irregular (informal) forms of employment or irregularities in migrants' paperwork, which would classify them as "illegal" or undocumented. I will mainly use here the term "irregular", at times interchangeably with "undocumented", especially when referring to the pioneer period when the bulk of Moldovan migrants fell under the category of "illegal" migrants due to overstaying their visa or crossing the border clandestinely.

4 Certain shops or public spots functioned as advertising sites for various announcements, mostly job or housing.

5 Romanian proverb: "Socoteala de acasă nu se potrivește cu cea din târg"

6 Ironical references used by the respondent alluding to totalitarian features of this type of work, comparing it either to mine work or enslaving treatment applied by Gestapo police in Nazi Germany and German-occupied Europe.

7 The same reality was evidenced in the case of Ukrainian mother and daughters, as illustrated by X's study.

8 Acquiring a sense of place – the metonymy of place incorporates the "experiential and expressive ways places are known, imagined, yearned for, held, remembered, voiced, lived, contested and struggled over" (Cassey 1996:11).

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WOMEN OF THE GULAG IN LIZIKO KAVTARADZE'S MEMOIR: "WIVES", URKAS AND POLITICAL PRISONERS

Abstract

The article deals with the memoir of gulag survivor and political prisoner Liziko (Elisabed) Kavtaradze. It discusses the hierarchies and power relations within the camp system by drawing boundaries between the inmates and functions as a successful medium for the author to reconstruct herself as an intellectual.

Keywords: memoir, gulag, women, Liziko Kavtaradze, hierarchies, political prisoners

Introduction

In Russia, the first gulag memoirs appeared during the Thaw and their number significantly increased through Perestroika,[1] though the same did not happen in Georgia, even after gaining its independence in 1991. The reasons why gulag survivors, some of them still alive in the 1990s, remained silent, with very few exceptions, require separate in-depth analysis; However, political and economic turbulences, unavailability of the archives, the reluctance of those in power to enact lustration law or to work on the politics of memory, the cult of Stalin as ethnically Georgian,[2] all played a considerably obstructive role.

Most part of Georgian KGB archives were intentionally destroyed during the civil war of 1991 or retrieved to Russia at the very beginning of the collapse of the Soviet Union. The surviving 20% of the documents are still hard to acquire due to the complicated archival bureaucracy, ambiguous and hindering legal regulations, bad working conditions at archival spaces and inadequately high service prices.[3]

Moreover, neither were the victims of the great terror (proportionally one of the highest among the Soviet republics[4]) appropriately mourned and commemorated, nor was psycho-social trauma dealt with on micro

and macro levels.[5] For a long time there was no organization, similar to Memorial in Russia, for instance, that would collect the memories of the survivors on a national level. Respectively, their narratives did not become a leading medium for the facilitation of public knowledge about the great terror.[6]

Only from the mid-2000s onwards did some NGOs, funds or civil initiatives become active in this respect[7] and directed their efforts towards revising and reevaluating the Soviet past. By then it was too late to work with the survivors, but the efforts made with the descendants were fruitful. For instance, Soviet Past Research laboratory (Sovlab), a team of young, dedicated intellectuals, intensively collected the stories of the survivors' descendants using different kinds of media to create a valuable database.[8] However, these efforts have not necessarily been followed by big public discussions.

Liziko and Her Memoir

In this context the very rare cases of survivors' memoirs gain special importance. Among them is the one written by Liziko (Elisabed) Kavtaradze (1905-1988), the only woman survivor whose memoir, 30 years after her death, was released as part of a selected volume of her works. Apart from her memoir, the book also includes her essays, articles and short stories. *28 Years in Gulag: Through the Path of Martyrdom* was published in 2008 under the edition of the author's nephew, film director and intellectual Ghia Chubabria. Although the collection consists of the texts of different genres, the lines are quite blurred – the memoir, the short stories or articles are written almost in the same manner and structure.

In this article I primarily deal with her memoir *Through the Dark Path of Our Lives* written in 1964, as it is the only text of this volume that largely deals with her experience as a political prisoner and an inmate of several labor camps in different parts of the Soviet Union.

Liziko (Elisabed) Kavtaradze was born in 1905 in Tbilisi, Georgia, in a family of upper middle-class intellectuals. In 1922, soon after entering Tbilisi State University at the Faculty of Law, she became a member of a secret organization of young social democrats. She was a supporter of one of the biggest national uprisings against the new Bolshevik government in 1924 and took active part in spreading anti-Soviet proclamations.[9]

In 1928 she was imprisoned for her Anti-Soviet campaign and a year later was exiled in Tomsk, Russia. In 1936, upon her release, she returned to Georgia, but had to live her life under constant surveillance. Liziko was re-arrested in 1940 and was sent to Karaganda, Kazakhstan. In total, she spent 28 years of her life in exile as a political prisoner.

After her final release and rehabilitation in the 1950s, she worked as an economist, wrote intensively, translated literary pieces from Georgian to Russian and developed close ties with the young emerging leaders of the newly formed nationalist movement who called her "the grandmother of the organization".[10]

Through the Dark Path of Our Lives is the author's historical testimony of the gulag experience, which undoubtedly was a gendered space with manifold power relations. Gulags, the network of camps and places of punishment scattered across the Soviet Union, made an economic empire based on forced labor. Best estimates indicate that 11 million people passed through Soviet labor camps and colonies (1934-1947) and almost 1/3 of them died. Women constituted around 30% of prisoners in 1945. They lived in the same conditions, had the same food and shelter, as well as the same work norms as men.[11] Women and men who mostly lived and worked in segregated camps under inhuman conditions unavoidably became a part of complicated prison hierarchies. Power relations within the camps took place not only between the inmates and guards/administration, but also among the prisoners themselves. These hierarchies within the women's camps are very well described in Liziko Kavtaradze's memoir requiring a special attention especially from the gender and class perspective.

Trauma, (Semi)-Silence, and…?

Similar to other numerous cases of gulag survivors, Liziko Kavtaradze's narrative belongs to a traumatized author. Almost all aspects of trauma can be identified here: incoherent narrative structure, silence on certain events and situations, absence of any emotional response to them, etc.[12] She also remains silent on certain issues but it is more a semi-silence rather than complete absence of speaking about sexual violence against women, for instance, which was a part of the everyday life in the Soviet labor camps. Elsewhere she recalls the arrival of new female prisoners from Georgia who, as she states, were recognized by their forcefully

shaved heads and adds: "One has to mention that much evil happened in Georgia [to women] and it was taken for granted".[13]

Unlike her semi-silence on rape, homosexual relationships or same sex intimacies are completely absent in her memoir. Unlike famous Russian authors like Evgeniya Ginzburg or Varlam Shalamov, she does not use extra disgust towards criminal inmates by relying on a homosexual stigma to draw the boundaries between them.[14]

Liziko's memoir is a fragmented story with lots of distractions, but these are mainly her intellectual reflections on certain events which are more or less related to the gulag experience. Switching back and forth to her life in camp, she discusses almost every political or philosophical issue she finds important. For instance, the memoir starts with the detailed description of the deportation process (Etap), unexpectedly shifting to an analysis of the "bloody politics" of Russia. Hence, from the very beginning, the author positions herself as an anti-Bolshevik and anti-imperialist thinker. Further on, from a philosophical, ethical and even literary perspective she discusses "human nature", the challenges of dehumanization in camps, gives a brilliant critical analysis of the prison system and its evil in the Soviet empire and even extends her discussion to the evaluation of international politics – at the interplay of great powers harshly criticizing both Hitler and Stalin, calling the latter "a big traitor of the world's progressive democracy".[15]

Throughout the incoherent narrative of this traumatized survivor one can still recognize an intelligent woman with brilliant analytical skills and advanced political thinking. For this reason, her memoir cannot be seen only through the trauma perspective, but also through her consistent attempts to rebuild, reconstruct and even rehabilitate herself as an intellectual. Her efforts become more comprehensible if we take into account the general context of the gulag itself – labor camps were to a large extent a corporal experience, with heavy and intensive physical work, with constant hunger, cold, filth and humiliation. With the struggle for everyday survival occupying so much time, there was no space left for "spiritual" insights or any kind of intellectual life which she later retrieved through writing her memoir as a survivor.

Women and Hierarchies in Gulags

Reconstructing herself as an intellectual is not done only through intellectual reflections in Kavtaradze's memoir – it is also produced by drawing special lines with other prisoners, for instance, with urkas – criminal inmates and with the "wives" - women married to party, military or intelligentsia elite, who were imprisoned and exiled mainly during 1937-38 under a special decree, as they were considered the family members of "traitors of homeland". Similar to other intellectuals, Liziko Kavtaradze creates these boundaries first and foremost by positioning herself as a political prisoner.

It is noteworthy that the early Bolshevik state recognized only three categories of criminals: common, political and counterrevolutionaries. Political criminals had many advantages but by 1930 all their privileges were altogether abolished[16] after which political prisoners found themselves in a very vulnerable position. As Liziko recalls:

> In Soviet Russia of the 1920s we, the political prisoners, had different living conditions. Forced labor was not imposed on us… We had books, all kinds of periodicals, separate "politcells", better food, right to correspondence and take long walks… and many other advantages. [17]

According to her, no prison reform took place in the Soviet state, which, in turn, increased the rates of crimes and violence. In the beginning political prisoners could maintain status quo by paying high prices - sometimes with their own lives[18] but from 1937 onwards, the situation drastically changed. Most of the political inmates were eliminated, "traditions were abolished and all the prisoners had to live the same regime". Liziko states that:

> It was a barbaric act of Bolshevism to equal political prisoners and criminals… Soviet penitentiaries completely abolished [our] unwritten rights and threw [us] in the mouth of the legions of Urkas.[19]

As a political prisoner from the late 1920s, she was well experienced in all her privileges which were hard to lose. From 1937, like many other "politicals", she had to navigate within new, highly challenging hierarchies, where common criminals – urkas appeared to be on the top.

Urkas: Controversial Feelings and Blurred Boundaries

> You cannot be vulnerable with an urka. You don't have to argue with her- she will win. Everything is acceptable for her. If you lose, she will remember it and make fun of it. Self-confidence is the best weapon, you have to be calm, non-hesitant... If she does not frighten you, then she becomes frightened herself. Like every coward, she is rude and impudent.[20]

This is how Liziko describes the relationship to a common criminal inmate. As she is an experienced prisoner, she is well aware how to navigate through the complicated hierarchies of the camp system. For instance, when she arrives in one of the pre-gulag prisons full of all kinds of inmates, what she does first is to take a sit on her own bundle, to take out a cigarette and smoke. When the whole cell starts asking for one, she takes a bunch out and throws them around keeping only two cigarettes for herself. The cell is impressed with her self-confidence and calmness; criminals realize that she is not one that can be put down easily.

The hierarchy among the inmates is visible in the cell. As the author mentions, "declassed scums" dominate the space and dwell on the upper cell beds whereas "intelligentsia" takes the prison floor "as sheep among the "wolves" and then continues by saying that "antagonism among the prison floor and the cell beds was the hypertrophic reflection of the spirit and power relations of the outside world". [21]

She also knows well how to gain the trust and sympathy of the criminal inmates. She gives one of the urkas her bundle to keep and later finds her place "up", nearby the window, where it is too cold but she can afford it as she managed to keep her coat and hat. Urkas take her bundle as "a deed" and call her auntie. [22]

Urkas, similar to many other political prisoners are "polluted bodies" for her too; they "murmur like worms". In order to gain their trust, she breaks physical boundaries with them but later she has "to pay" for it.

> Friendship with urkas does not go in vain. All my head itches, I take the comb. Timofeeva [another political prisoner] helps me armed with her glasses.

There are some cases when urkas even share their past histories with her. "They tell me how they ended up here, in this life. It is their favorite fairy tale", remarks Kavtaradze, as criminal women depict their past as

something they wished they had had rather than the one they had actually lived, believing their own false stories.

It is mostly disgust that Kavataradze experiences towards criminal inmates but she is not coherent in this feeling either.

> They are either degenerates or mostly talented hyperactive people with high soul energy. Their biographies rest on their resistances to families, to society. The power that cannot find its creative way to be expressed destroys everything, including its own self. Hunger and the prison made most of them dangerous recidivists. Millions of young people became the victim of the Soviet prison and terror.[23]

In the end, it seems that she can at least partly free herself form the disgust of criminal inmates, drawing a rational conclusion that neither urkas, nor generally "human nature" have to be blamed for the evil and misdeeds of labor camps, but rather the Soviet totalitarian system itself.

Bonds with Other Political Prisoners

Gulag was not merely a place of hierarchies and power relations. It also made room for close emotional (and sometimes sexual) bonds and friendships among women. According to Kavtaradze's memoir, these bonds apparently were developed mainly along the class lines. For instance, "politicals" befriended only political inmates.

In a pre-gulag cell Liziko joins other political prisoners: Timofeeva, Grevenitz and Krukowska. It is noteworthy that their boding develops through the intensive scholarly disputes they immediately start after introducing themselves to each other. The author gives a very detailed description of their extended intellectual talks about revolution, reforms, war, capitalism, socialism and totalitarianism, political and economic effects of industrialization, etc.

Liziko expresses special sympathy towards a Polish political prisoner named Nika Krukowska. She admires Nika's deep intellectual insights and also fancies her because of her ethnicity. She mentions some other Polish women as well, in a very positive and respectful manner, and feels huge solidarity towards them, regarding their situation as similar to that in Georgia, considering Poland to be a victim of Russian (and Soviet) empire.

But lives in camps were not peaceful and predictable. Due to many reasons the prisoners were moved from camp to camp and one never knew where and how she would carry on. It also meant the separation from dear friends. According to Liziko, this separation was the hardest part of the gulag life. It was very difficult for her to break up with Krukowska whom she could not find later after her release and rehabilitation.

Wives as "Others"

In 1937 a new category of criminals appeared – the wives of the traitors of the motherland. They were mostly wives but, in some cases, also sisters or daughters of imprisoned or shot men - party, military or intelligentsia elite. The logic behind their arrests was that family members of the traitors could not have been unaware of the "bad deeds" of their husbands and they had to be punished for not reporting.

Even though they were mostly elite women, political prisoners still despised them. For instance, one of Liziko's friends, also a political prisoner, calls the wives "vanyuchki" – the stinking. The author herself compares them to a specific insect that issues a heavy smell to protect itself when sensing danger.

"Politicals" found "wives" to be conformists to the Soviet regime. For Liziko, the main dividing line also corresponds to the intellectual background:

> They [the wives] take no interest in anything – neither in a human being, nor in the outside world towards which we still strive. I don't know how to explain it – indifference of a philistine or detachment of a tortured, exhausted person. [unlike them] we met the new ones [the prisoners] enthusiastically, listened to them passionately, took care of them in every detail. We [the political prisoners] searched, doubted, thought, discussed - always keen to follow and feel the pulse of life.[24]

It seems there was a "counter-attitude" from the side of "wives" as well. For instance, during the deportation, the author meets an "aristocrat's wife" for whom all the other inmates, including political prisoners, were "worthless".

According to Shapovalov, most of the wives saw themselves as innocent victims and believed that their arrest was a mistake. With rare exceptions,

they obeyed the camp rules without questioning them and tried to prove they were worthy members of the Soviet society. They did what they could to win back the trust of the Soviet state.[25] Thus, political prisoners blamed them for conformism, whereas "wives" viewed "politicals" as guilty of crimes against the state. Apparently, this made it almost impossible to create any kind of bonding between "politicals" and "wives".

Conclusion

Liziko Kavataradze's memoir is a kind of self-hagiography where the survivor first and foremost constructs herself as an intellectual. She does it by writing from the perspective of a political prisoner defining (sometimes not that well-kept) boundaries with other inmates – mainly with criminals and "wives", thus giving a very good perspective of power relations and hierarchies within the camp system.

However, the main emphasis is on the need to reconstruct herself as a Georgian intellectual and work against the stigma of "enemy of the people" – the label with which many survivors struggled for a long time after their release. Therefore, this memoir can be interpreted as a successful medium for the rehabilitation and reintegration of the author at least in her late life, when she was proudly accepted and highly admired by the young leaders of the emerging national movement of Georgia.

NOTES

1 Irina Scherbakova, "Gulag Memory Map: Problems and Gaps" in *Laboratorium,* (7 (1). 2015):114.

2 The first anti-Soviet uprising in Tbilisi took place in March 1956, which actually was the strike against the new government of Nikita Khrushchev and its anti-Stalinist propaganda politics.

3 Anton Vacharadze, "Assessment of the Openness of State Archives in Georgia", Institute for Development of Freedom of Information, 2018.

4 According to the data from the Soviet Past Research Laboratory, at least 80,000 Georgian citizens were arrested by the KGB in 1921-1991. Around 20,000 were shot during 1921-1951 and 11,000 – during the terror of 1937-38.

5 Darejan Javakhishvili, *totalitaruli represiebit gamowveuli fsiqosocialuri tramvis gavlena da taobatashorisi gadacema saqartvelos magaitze,* Ilia State University, 2017:233.

6 Leena Kurvet-Kaosaar, "Voicing Trauma in Deportation Narratives of Baltic Women" in *Haunted Narratives: Life Writing in an Age of Trauma,* University of Toronto, 2013:133.

7 Among them South Caucasus Regional Office of Heinrich Boell Foundation, Institute for Development of Freedom and Information (IDFI) and Soviet Past Research Laboratory (Sovlab) are notable.

8 Collection of the oral histories "Portraits of the Prisoners of "Alzhir": History of Stalinism" published in 2008 by South Caucasus Regional Office of Heinrich Boell Foundation is one of the first and a remarkable publication on this topic.

9 Giorgi Maisuradze, "aq vdgavar da sxvanairad ar zalmizs" in *28 celi gulagshi,* Liziko Kavtarade, 2008:27.

10 Ibid. p.30.

11 Ann Applebaum, *Gulag: A History,* Anchor Books, New York, 2003.

12 Leena Kurvet-Kaossar, "Creating a Habitable Everyday in Estonian Women's Diaries of the Repressions of Stalinist Regime" in *The Unspeakable: Narratives of Trauma,* Stroinska, Cechetto, Szymanski (eds.) PL Academic Research, Frankfurt am Main, 2014:155.

13 Liziko Kavtaradze, *28 celi gulgashi,* Publishing House Pegas, 2008.

14 Ibid. p.129.

15 Ibid. p. 130.

16 Veronika Shapovalov, *Remembering the Darkness: Women in Soviet Prisons,* Rowman& Littlefield, 2001.

17 Liziko Kavtaradze, *28 celi gulgashi,* Publishing House Pegas, 2008:101.

18 Ibid. p.102.

19 Ibid. p. 79.

20 Ibid. p. 76.

21 Ibid. p. 79.
22 Ibid. p. 88.
23 Ibid. p. 126.
24 Ibid. p. 148.
25 Veronica Shapovalov, *Remembering the Darkness: Women in Soviet Prisons,* Rowman& Littlefield, 2001.

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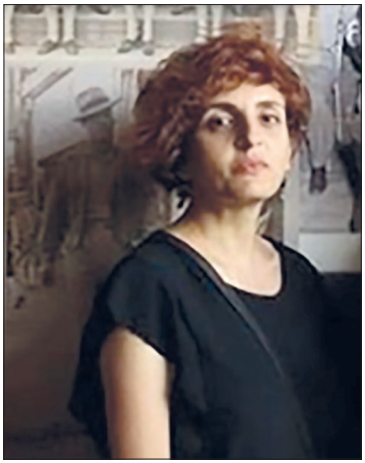

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NARRATIVES OF THE ARMENIAN POLEMICS WITH THE MUSLIMS FROM THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

Abstract

The Armenian polemical literature from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries proliferated in relation to the surge of confessional consciousness within the Armenian communities under the Ottoman and Safavid rule. Early Modern inter- and cross-confessional debates on the orthodoxy shaped the broad context in which polemics with the Muslims have to be placed. The scarcity of anti-Islamic texts in the Armenian manuscript heritage compared to the abundant extant anti-Catholic polemical material has laid grounds for the assumption that Armenians were not interested in the religion of the rulers in the confessional age regardless of the fact, that the heuristic potential of the age enhanced the necessity of learning through questioning and answering. Drawing upon manuscript material this paper analyzes broader socio-historical context the polemics with the Muslims transpired within. It examines the switch in debated topics, argumentations, vocabulary and language to reveal the dialogic and heuristic aspects of anti-Muslim Armenian polemics in the age of confessions.

Keywords: polemic dialogue, Armenian anti-Muslim polemics, heuristic, confessionalization, non-knowledge, orthodoxy, cross-confessional, inter-religious, Yovhannēs Mrkʻuz, Stepʻanos Daštecʻi.

Introduction

The study of the Armenian polemics with the Muslims as inter-religious debates on faith and communal norms in Early Modern era is to be placed within the multi-confessional and multi-religious context of the period. Inter-religious polemics with both the Muslims and Jews came second after the inter-confessional and cross-confessional debates central to the Armenian communal life of the period due to the spread of Global Catholicism.

When mapping Armenian polemical literature with the Muslims from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, one discovers its conspicuous scarcity compared to the prevailing quantity of polemics with the Catholic papists. The digital database I have been building in the course of the last three years[1] reveals that, out of the four hundred polemical pieces listed, only three individual solid treatises were composed to polemicise with the Shiite Muslims, to which I will return in later pages. Other than that, there are small passages or anecdotal narratives preserved in various unpublished books of questions,[2] vernacular literature, historiographic accounts and in what might be called a major source of bottom-up polemics— the new martyrologies.[3]

Another striking fact is the lacuna in scholarship. Little is said and published on the subject. Recent interest in Christian-Muslim relations among Ottoman and Safavid history scholars led to the publication and translation of a handful of new martyrological narratives. However, the most important sources remained unstudied, probably because of their pure theological character. Scholars have mostly focused on the polemicists relying solely on bio-bibliographical notes and steering clear of the analysis of polemical aspects of the treatises per se. On the other hand, some better studied texts by Soviet Armenian scholars were not decently contextualised.

The idea to resort to the polemical literature of the Early Modern period with the intention to reconstruct possible inter-religious debates was provoked by a statement in a book on Medieval Armenian polemical texts against the Muslims composed up to the beginning of the fifteenth century. It reads "even after the Middle Ages no new material was added to the Cycle [of Muhammad's life —A.O.], no interest was detected in learning about the religion of the rulers, who were now the Ottoman Turks, the Persians, Arabs and Kurds."[4] Such a general understanding of Early Modern communal modes in the Ottoman and Safavid context prompted me to once again delve into the manuscript heritage in search of proof that regardless of the scarcity of material the Armenians did show interest in Islam in the Early Modern era and not only recycled Medieval anecdotes about prophet Muhammed's life and deeds, but also composed individual pieces informed by the social discourse in a multi-religious and multi-confessional environment.

The study of the corpus of polemical texts with Muslims in Armenian and Armeno-Turkish allows us to understand the relatively small number of sources, to explain the context in which they were produced as well

as to show what was new in the polemics with the Muslims in the Early Modern era and whether it was geared towards the new conditions of cohabitation. It also enables us to find out whether and how Armenian Mediaeval polemical writings influenced the later texts in terms of topics and vocabulary through the examination of the social and political contexts and disputed themes between the Muslims and Christians. To this end, it is important to illustrate the twofold geo-political settings in which polemical literature from the given period was produced.

Historical Context of Polemics with the Muslims

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Armenian communities throughout Anatolia and the Armenian plateau came under the rule of two Islamic empires, Ottoman and Safavid. After the forced resettlement of Armenians to Persia by Shah Abbas I (1587-1629) in 1604 and the division of Armenia into Western (Ottoman) and Eastern (Safavid) parts by the bilateral agreement of 1638, Constantinople with its powerful Armenian Patriarchate and well-connected *beau monde* in the Ottoman Empire and New Julfa near Isfahan in Safavid Iran with its splendid All Saviour's monastery, printing mill and wealthy merchants, gradually became key centres for the cultural and religious life of the Armenians and set the tone for the intellectual discourse of the period, to which polemics was central.[5] The spiritual and administrative centre of the Armenian Miaphysite (non-Chalcedonic) Church was Echmiadzin near Yerevan accommodating the throne of the supreme hierarch of the Armenian Apostolic Church, who was the ultimate decision-maker on ecclesiastical and diplomatic matters.

Given the new geo-political and socio-religious situation, the ecclesiastical life of the Armenian Church in the Ottoman and Safavid realms was run in different ways and under totally different conditions. But no matter what, it was those three cities that became central to the proliferation of confessional literature in general and inter-confessional Armenian polemical pieces in particular.

The scarcity of written polemics with the Muslims in Safavid Persia and its total absence in the Ottoman environment has to be further discussed within the given geo-political context. One should also bear in mind the broader intra-Christian confession-building strategies of the time aiming at shaping strong confessional identities through social disciplining. As

U. Lotz-Heumann argued,[6] confessionalist strategies among Christians after the emergence of Protestantism and the Counterreformation, had affected literary genres, pieces and their authors across Europe and beyond its boundaries, whereas a parallel process coined by T. Kritic[7] and D. Terzioglu[8] as "sunnitization" in the Ottoman Empire was targeted at the formation of the Sunni identity as well as the reshaping of Sunni orthodoxy through the indoctrination of Muslim population. "Sunnitization" might have resulted in censorship of literary works limiting the publication activities of the Ottoman Christian subjects. In virtue of this, while literary polemics with the representatives of other confessions flourished among Armenians, the composition of polemical treatises against Sunni Muslims proved to be unfeasible. For the same reasons disputations with the Muslims in the courts (*mejlis*) and squares (*maydan*) specific to previous centuries were no longer practiced in the Ottoman lands. It seems that the delineation of the boundaries of Shiism transpired in the Safavid realm in the face of Sunni rivals, however, in contrast to Ottomans, the form of public polemics survived in Isfahan and other Persian cities. It was visible predominantly in the debates with the Catholic missionaries—the luminaries from the West, which was not always possible to pursue when it came to the Shah's Christian subjects, such as Armenians.

The scarcity of polemical literature with the Muslims in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries might be linked as well to the shift in perceptions of the image of the "enemy." Not that the Muslims, both Shiite and Sunni, ceased to be considered as major enemies. On the contrary, the contemporary Armenian historiographers painted the violent and unjust attitude of the Sunni towards Ottoman non-Muslim subjects in all possible blinks, as found in Eremia Çelebi K'ēōmiwrčean's (1637-1695) unpublished *Guile of Spite of the Tačiks towards the Christians*[9], where he provides detailed descriptions of communal modes of engagement with Sunni Muslims. In spite of his full integration into the Ottoman society, his connections with the Ottoman administrative elite and efforts to steer clear of from the critics of Islam, Eremia Çelebi reflected on the everyday harsh conflicts between the Armenians, Greeks, Syrians on the one hand and Sunni Muslims on the other, resulting in bloodshed, new martyrdoms and detention of the Christians.[10] His writing might be taken as a manual for the Armenians on how to avoid conversion to Islam on a quotidian basis by the hands of the most dangerous and cunning "enemy."[11] The major shift in the perception of the image of the "enemy," at least on the level of written polemics, occurred when the Armenians encountered

the engulfing march of the agents of Global Catholicism. First encounters with the Tridentine missionaries happened as early as 1602, when the Augustinians from Goa, sponsored by Portuguese *Padroado*, visited the Eastern part of Armenia, later in 1607, accompanied by the Discalced Carmelites' mission, in 1628 by the Capuchins, in 1647 by the Jesuits, dispatched to those lands to convert Muslims and Oriental Christians, though with little success, if not total failure.[12]

In Ottoman lands, particularly in Constantinople, Catholic intrusion into the internal affairs of the Armenian Church was postponed for several decades. The establishment of *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* in 1622 and the launch of Urbanian College in 1627, gradually changed confessional dynamics within Armenian communities in Constantinople and Lviv. The forceful conversion of the Armenian Apostolic community of Lviv to Catholicism in the course of 1630-1689,[13] pushed the spiritual centre of the Armenian Church to switch from the strategy of "good correspondence" to a more confessionalist one. Accommodationist strategies of Jesuit missionaries[14] resulted in the formation of a community of Catholic Armenians (*aktarma*), participating in common worship and sacraments of the Armenian Apostolic Church.[15] The tension between the Armenians and Catholic converts in the Ottoman Empire escalated when in 1695 Sultan Mustafa II (1695-1703) issued an Edict limiting the missionaries' presence in the Empire and warning Ottoman Christian subjects against conversion to the Catholic faith on the pain of execution.[16] This situation served as an impetus for redefining the boundaries of the Armenian faith in the Early Modern period, meanwhile switching the vectors of polemics from the "religious others" towards "confessional others." It further brought about polemical prioritisation gravitating in the direction of "interior enemy", that is converted Catholic Armenians. Such a polemical polarisation put literary polemics with the Sunni Muslims into perspective, instead triggering the proliferation of anti-Catholic literary polemics to the fullest.

Reference of "Non-knowledge" to the anti-Muslim Armenian Polemical Tradition

To conceptualize the alleged "lack of interest" of the Armenians in learning about the religion of the rulers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries one should enquire about what was the knowledge of someone's

faith in the age of confessions. In his recent research Cornel Zwierlein pointed to the "knowledge gaps" in confessional age due to ignorance in communication.[17] He further developed the theory of "non-knowledge" that could be applied also to the literary polemics from the period in question. According to Zwierlein, general knowledge about confessional differences, such as the schism between East and West was common, whereas if one had to ask the representatives of the respective confessions about each other's doctrinal peculiarities or theological developments, in fact one would discover a great deal of ignorance. Although the ecclesiastical tradition was uninterrupted, the "non-knowledge" of peculiarities of each other's confessional tradition was in virtue of the lack of communication and exchange on particular topics and ignorance of the theological and apologetical sources those traditions were anchored on. However, the uniqueness of the confessional age was in its huge heuristic potential, meaning that the confessional age actually enhanced contact and exchange between the representatives of different confessions and religions. It stimulated curiosity towards the peculiarities of each other's faith to be learned through questioning and answering for the sake of the delineation of the boundaries of their own doctrine.[18]

The suggested concept of "non-knowledge" might be applicable also to the anti-Muslim Armenian literary polemics. The "non-knowledge" of the Islamic faith had already been reflected in the fourteenth-century heresiological treatise by Peter of Aragona translated from Latin into Armenian within the Armenian-Dominican circles. Peter of Aragona fused his anti-Muslim accusations with those anti-Jewish: it was a common practice in the Medieval West to associate Islamic "errors" with Judaic ones based on their common semitic origin and monotheistic views.[19] Peter wrote that "those who dishonour God with their erroneous worship are the Jews, Muslims and heretics" and Muslims erred the same way as Jews and heretics did.[20]

In reference to the seventeenth century, a good example of "non-knowledge" of Islamic apologetics is *Praecipuae Objectiones* written in the form of questions and answers in 1679 by a polyglot Capuchin missionary to Levant, Justinien de Neuvy (Michael Febvre).[21] The book was translated into Arabic and Armenian.[22] On its pages the author responds to the objections of Muslims, Jews, Armenian and Syriac "heretics." Interestingly, Justinien responds to his imaginary Muslim opponents' objections on the Christian faith in a manner that reveals his limited views on both Islam and Muslims' knowledge of Christianity.[23] Bernard

Heyberger states that "missionaries were themselves ignorant of Muslim theological and apologetic literature and were unable to put in the mouths of their imaginary rival any sophisticated arguments".[24] Even in actual conversations with the Muslims on the matter of faith, they were unable "to go beyond traditional Christian argumentations against Mahomet and his prophecy".[25] Hence, cliché argumentations against the Muslims and their views about Christianity were copied and distributed throughout the missionary polemical literature.

In this respect, it is important to mention that the seventeenth-century Armenian polemicists possessed knowledge on Islam. The so-called Cycle of Muhammads life and deeds based on Garshuni text was instrumental in medieval polemics against the Muslims.[26] Its vernacular variants were introduced into the seventeenth century, although with little success among the intellectuals.[27] The Medieval Armenian *canon* of polemics against the Muslims stuffed with traditional Christian argumentations as well as arguments informed by the local Armenian context seemed to become outdated in the eyes of the late seventeenth-century polemicists. Although in use, those texts failed to correspond to the new context of Early Modern era and communal modes of cohabitation with the Ottoman Turks and Safavid Persians. Hence, a rethought polemical vocabulary and argumentation informed by the multi-religious social fabric in given twofold geopolitical settings had to be shaped with the focus on dialogic forms of polemics with the Muslim rulers.

Medieval Polemical Canon against the Muslims versus Early Modern Polemic Dialogues

The standard of Medieval Armenian anti-Muslim literature had been drawn by the late fourteenth-century prominent scholastic theologian, archimandrite Grigor Tat'ewac'i (1345-1409).[28] In the chapter *Against the Tačiks* of his seminal treatise titled *Book of Questions*,[29] Grigor Tat'ewac'i polemicised with the Muslims in sixteenth clauses employing traditional Christian argumentations in his refutations of Islam predominantly when it came to the Holy Trinity (Kutsal Üçlülük) and the problems of theodicy. According to Tat'ewac'i, the Muslims erred in relation to Christianity with the following clauses: 1. Denying the Trinity; 2. Considering God the Origin of both Good and Evil; 3. Rejecting the Incarnation of Logos and Considering Christ a Prophet; 4. Rejecting Christ's Divinity (he is a

human and a prophet); 5. Rejecting the Holy Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments; 6. Considering a certain Man (i.e. Muhammad) a Prophet; 7. Considering the Resurrection Corporeal; 8. Considering the Mortality of angels and human soul; 9. Despising and dishonouring the cross and icons and the Armenian practice of worshiping the Sun of Justice; 10. Indiscriminately Eating the Flesh of Contaminated Animals; 11. Forbidding Wine as *haram* (i.e. forbidden); 12. Considering Washing with Water for Purification of Sins; 13. Despising Armenians for not Being Circumcised; 14. Refusing to Apply the Fast of both the Old and New Laws; 15. Refusing the meat of Animals Slaughtered by Armenians; 16. Considering Armenians Infidels while Being such Themselves.[30]

Against the Tačiks is composed in the form of questions and answers targeted at the monks of the prominent Tatʻew monastery in Siwnikʻ, in the southern region of Armenia Proper.[31] Tatʻewacʻiʼs interlocutor is the learned Armenian Apostolic faithful in general, which becomes clear from the lines about the debate on the usefulness of wine. "If you are asked by unlearned or violent Muslims whether wine is halal or haram, reply briefly, 'For us—halal, for you—haram.'"[32] Sergio La Porta has pointed to the impact of Latin polemical sources on Tatʻewacʻiʼs *Book of Question* while analysing its anti-Jewish passages.[33] In fact, Latin sources were intensively translated by the representatives of the Latinizing school of Kṙna in Naxiǰevan in the fourteenth century, such as Peter of Aragona and Bartholomew of Bologna. In spite of the integration of cliché argumentations, peculiar to the Medieval Latin polemical genre, a number of polemical passages of Tatʻewacʻiʼs anti-Muslim piece were informed by local socio-religious context and forms of coexistence with contemporary Muslims. The major strategic improvement in his polemics against the Muslims is their intentional segregation from the Jews. Muslims for Tatʻewacʻi are neither Judaeans, nor Christians, but rather heathens or neopagans, because Muslim circumcision is at odds with both Jewish circumcision and Christian baptism. Regardless of their common semitic and monotheistic grounds the Jews and Muslims should have fallen into separate categories.

Tatʻewacʻiʼs *Against the Tačiks* became the Medieval *canon* of polemics against the Muslims partly reiterated by his famous pupil Mattʻēos J̌ułayecʻi (d. 1420) in the book titled *Some Responses to the Questions of Infidels*.[34] *Against the Tačiks* cropped up in diverse vernacular miscellanea from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries. Just like the anecdotal narratives about Muhammadʼs life, this chapter was left out of more serious anti-Muslim

Armenian polemical writings of the Early Modern period. The relative distantiation from the Medieval *canon* and argumentations for the polemics against the Muslims was conditioned with the set of new questions rising from the Early Modern patterns of living in diversity, that were to be articulated through rethought vocabulary and genres. In this regard, the polemical fashion gravitated towards dialogic forms. The early modern tendency to make polemics more practical served multiple needs and targeted multiple audiences.[35] Hence, in line with the spirit of era, the Armenian written polemics with the Muslims acquired conversational shape growing into polemic dialogues.

Polemic dialogues had long become a popular genre for the missionary literature of the seventeenth-century Catholic Church. In the majority of cases they served didactic needs in making sophisticated theological disputes digestible for the readership. Bernard Heyberger argued that missionary polemic dialogues followed the so-called *common habitus approach*,[36] meaning that the rival conversant of a Christian missionary had to be an exceptionally educated Muslim sharing the same level of intellectual potential and social status with that of the Western luminaries. It seemed to be an extremely elitist, but to some extent justified approach, taking into account the specifics of the theological debates missionaries had to carry out.

In the Armenian context, the approach of *common habitus* could be detected in the polemics of the seventeenth-century Dominican friar Paolo Piromalli (1592-1667), a missionary to Persia sponsored by the Roman Curia, whose initial goal was to organise a treaty of the Armenian Church with Rome. Piromalli was called to the court in Isfahan in 1647 to participate in a religious debate with grand vizier Khalifa Sultan (d. 1654).[37] He boasted to be invited by Shah Abbas II himself "to be interrogated about the Christian faith."[38] Missionaries always felt superiority over Orientals, even the Shah or grand vizier. Based on his conversation with Khalifa Sultan, in 1651 Piromalli composed a polemical treatise in Persian[39] titled *On the Veracity of Christian Faith [to Shah Abbas II]*; or *To the Persian King Shah Abbas.*[40] Piromalli's visit to the court not only testifies to the *common habitus* approach, but demonstrates the uninterruptedness of the custom of public intellectual debates in the Safavid Shiite environment, that was less common in the Ottoman realm.

The undetectability of the traces of public intellectual debates with the Sunni Muslims does not necessarily denote the complete impossibility of intellectual exchange between the Armenian and Ottoman representatives

on the matters of belief. Allusions to intellectual exchanges between the representatives of the respective religions might be found in versified theological texts, where the names of interlocutors were codified in the acrostics or marginal notes. A versified confession of faith by Sukʻias Pṙusacʻi (d.ca. 1707), the most learned, ambiguous and ambitious bishop of his time, gives away the name of Sukʻias' addressee in an acrostic as follows: "O, my beloved Ğendi Zade Nimetullah Čʻelēbi, accept these words from Sukʻias".[41] This apologetical poem introduces the basics of the Christian faith, intentionally laying stresses on the doctrine of Trinity, creation *ex nihilo*, procession of Holy Spirit from Father and unmixed one nature in Christ. It further shows that an unexposed, veiled conversation between the members of the Armenian and Muslim intellectual elite transpired even in the Ottoman milieu.

At the same time debates on belief were an everyday practice among the populace in bazaars, maydans, stores, roads, described in neo-martyrologies and historiographical accounts. The Armenian manuscript tradition preserved a unique new martyrdom of an Orthodox (Western) Syriac priest Եłia Xarberdcʻi, written before 1657. It contains an excessive vindication of the dogmas of the Holy Trinity and Incarnation written in Armeno-Turkish[42]—a vernacular language intelligible to the Armenian populace—and put on the lips of Եłia. The argumentation used in this polemics is Muslim reader-oriented demonstrating that it served predominantly didactic needs. A small passage from the polemics is given below.

Text in Armeno-Turkish:

Էլիֆ տէմէէ Ալլահ տր. նիճէ ի տօղրու էլիֆ պիր տր, Երրորդութիւն տր. Պէ տէմէէ ալդնտայ պիր նօֆտա վար, օլ նօֆտա Քէլամ ալլահ տր, ի կօկտէն էնտի. թէ տէմէէ մէրիամ տր ի իսա հէլլ օլտի գառնինտայ թէյին ուստիւնտայ իֆի նօֆտա վար եայ նէ՞ տր, պիրիսի Մէրիամ տր, վէ պիրիսի Իսա տր: Սէ ուստունտայ իւչ նօֆտա վար, եայ նէ՞ տր. Թէթլիք վէ թէվհիտ տիր, վէ էրմանի տիլինճէ Հայր և Որդի և Սուրբ Հոգի տէնիլիր:[43]

Transliteration to Modern Turkish:

Elif demek Allahdır, nice ki doğru elif birdir—Երրորդութիւնdır (Üçlülüktür). Be demek altında bir nokta var, o nokta Kelam Allahdır, ki gökten indi. Te demek Miriamdır, ki İsa gel oldu karınında. Te'nin üstünde iki nokta var, ya nedir? Birisi Miriamdır, ve birisi İsadır. Se üstünde üç nokta var, ya

nedir? Teslis ve Tevhiddir ve Ermeni dilince Հայր և Որդի և Սուրբ Հոգի (Baba ve Oğul ve Kutsal Ruh) denilir.

English Translation:
Elif (ا) means God, as the straight elif is one, [which is] Trinity. Be (ب) has a dot beneath, that dot is God the Word, who descended from the heavens. Te (ت) means Mariam, whose womb Jesus descended into. Te (ت) has two dots above. What is that? One is Mariam, the other is Jesus. Se (ث) has three dots above. What is that? Trinity and Oneness, and in Armenian language it is articulated as Father and Son and Holy Spirit.

Myriad of accounts on neo-martyrs in the Ottoman Empire illustrate incidents of public polemics with the Muslim populace and elite prior to the execution of a martyr. Solely a handful out of many neo-martyrologies could be singled out as containing serious theological debates with the Sunni Muslims, one of which is undoubtedly the narrative about Ełia Xarberdc'i. Other than that, there are no testimonies to open theological debates from the Early Modern Ottoman context. In contrast to it, as it was shown in the case of Paolo Piromalli, the Shiite elite was keen on accommodating public and tête-à-tête debates with educated Christians on the matter of religion. Even so, such a debate with Catholic missionaries, symbolising Western wisdom, could be possible. In the eyes of Shahs, Piromalli, for instance, represented the power of the Pope and wealthy Europe, sharing *common habitus* with the oriental rulers in terms of erudition. Such an open conversation with Shahs' Christian subjects—*dhimmis* or *rayas*—would naturally be impossible, if not for the heuristic dimension of the confessional age.

Cases of Armenian Polemic Dialogues with the Shiite Muslims

Two important instances of the Armenian polemics with the Shiite Muslims shine light on the dialogic as well as heuristic aspects of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries inter-religious literary polemics. The authors of the polemics are Yovhannēs Mrk'uz (worthless) J̌ułayec'i (1643-1715) and Step'anos Daštec'i or Step'anos Basiliow Širip'alankean (1653-1720). Both authors were from New Julfa near Isfahan; the former was an Armenian Apostolic *vardapet* (archimandrite, doctor of theology),

the latter—an Armenian merchant with theological background converted to Catholicism. Having known each other from New Julfa, they were at odds with each other's confessional position and views on orthodoxy and orthopraxy, but regardless of the inter-personal tensions, both authors proved to be good at polemic dialogues with the Muslims adding political and poetical dimensions to theological debates.

Yovhannēs Mrk'uz J̌uxayec'i known as Avānūs Khalīfa in Persian sources was well-versed in Arabic and Persian, honoured by both Armenians and Persians as a profound theologian and philosopher of the All Saviour's (Amenap'rkič') Armenian Monastery in New Julfa. Among his students Persian Muhhamed Ali Hazīn Lahījī is remembered, who studied the Gospels with Yovhannēs.[44] Mrk'uz was constantly engaged in inter-confessional orthodoxy disputes with the Catholic missionaries of Isfahan attempting to decline the miaphysite position in Christian Christology. On the other hand, the honour by the Safavid court Yovhannēs had earned for his erudition allowed him to polemicize on Islam-related topics as well. He wrote a bilingual Persian-Armenian treatise *Polemical Book to Shah Suleiman of Persia*.[45] The book is a conversation with Shah Suleiman (1666-1694) on the nature of Christian belief and a vindication of its principal dogmas written in dialogic fashion.

The conversation with Shah Suleiman begins with the latter's visitation to the All Saviour's Armenian monastery, where Yovhannēs' was a monk. The splendid monastery was famous for its lavish mural paintings, parts of which had been painted by Yovhannēs himself. The rich interior of the monastery had been attracting many renowned Christian and Muslim preachers, travellers, merchants and statesmen flowing to view the frescos and converse with the famous teacher. It seems that visits to the All Saviour's monastery served as momentum to the initiation of a theological conversation on the matter of iconodulism. It is clearly traced in the dialogue with father François Sanson, an ambassador to Safavid lands, who visited the All Saviour's monastery in 1687 with an intention to polemicize on Armenian faith. Yovhannēs writes:

> Now, upon pater ambassador's visit to the monastery, after greeting each other we entered the Holy Church, and when he noticed the splendour of the Holy Church, he said, 'Blessed is the Lord, that amongst far-flung Persians you have such an adorned and gilt Church. I implore the opulent Creator to dispense its unity with the orthodox Roman Church.[46]

The excessive dialogue with Shah Suleiman starts in a similar fashion. Upon his entering into the monastery, the Shah looks around and asks the monks about the reason for having all those images painted above the prayer place. After receiving the answer that the paintings were there for knowledge, Suleiman continued:

> The king says, "The knowledge based on Scriptures is better than images."
> Then turns to ask, "Is it possible that these paintings have a symbolic meaning or are they solely for embellishment?"
> His eunuch purposely replies to him, "This is nothing else, but idolatry."
> The king says, "Not possible that those do not have symbolic meaning, as these people are people of books and it is not possible for the paintings to lack symbolic meaning."
> The king asked the servant Yovhannēs, "What would you say?"
> The servant [Yovhannēs] replies, "Yes it is exactly as you said."
> The king says, "What is the symbolic meaning of these [images]?"
> Replies, "These are the means to percept invisible things, that is to say, the reflection of the unknown."
> The king says, "In which way?"
> Replies, "According to reason and according to the Scriptures."
> The king says, "Answer according to the reason, then if I wish, you will answer according to the scriptures."
> Replies, "These painted images are to perceive the mystery, as it is well known that a human being does not possess the perfection to perceive invisible things without the visible ones. Then, to perceive unknown things it was necessary to paint images lest if someone wishes the things sought to be perceived unerringly."
> The king says, "What does it mean to seek the unknown in the place where it has to be known." Replies, "The one sought is God."
> The king says, "It is possible [also] without those images."
> Replies, "How is that?"
> The king says, "With my entire nature I arrive to an assumption, that I am created and all visible things testify to the [existence of the] Creator."[47]

Obviously, starting with the question about the icons Shah Suleyman embarks on questioning Yovhannēs about the Christian faith in general. The discussion revolves predominantly around the following topics: 1 Iconolatry; 2. Oneness of God (God does not have a companion); 3. Divinity and Humanity of Christ; 4. Divinity of Logos; 5. Incarnation; 6. Differentiation between visible and invisible things; 7. Second Coming of Christ; 8. Mediation of Christ.

Judging from the above quoted passage, Yovhannēs engages traditional argumentation in defending the Christian doctrine, but he refrains from the application of the Medieval Armenian anti-Muslim canon on the whole. His argumentations are influenced by Tomistic theology known to him through both translated Medieval and missionary literature. Yovhannēs prefers references from Plato, Aristotle, Pierre Abelard although in his other works he demonstrates a good knowledge of the writings of Church Fathers like Gregory of Nazianzus and Cyril of Alexandria. *Polemical Book to Shah Suleiman* is written in Latinised Armenian. In contrast to the literature produced in the Ottoman milieu, polemical writings from the Safavid part of Armenia appeared either in Latinised Classical Armenian or in Classical Armenian stuffed with loanwords from Persian.

The "novelty" in Mrk'uz's polemics with the Muslims is the political dimension amended to the theological content. During the reins of Shah Suleiman and Husayn a crucial shift in the domestic religious policy was carried out. Contrary to Shah Abbas I and Abbas II, who were against mass conversion of the Armenians to Islam, Shah Suleiman and Husayn adopted the strategy of Imam Jafar for the Armenians and Jews, prompting mass migration of the Armenians to India and Europe. In the face of the application of the new law, Yovhannēs is more than inclined to prove the veracity of Christianity to Suleiman and remind him of Shah Abbas I, who not only allowed, but also encouraged the Armenians to build their churches as high as possible and to embellish them in every possible manner without any hint of accusation of idolatry.[48]

A significant feature of Yovhannēs' piece is the dynamic of the polemic dialogue that contributes to its heuristic character. From the very beginning Shah Suleiman demonstrates rather strong knowledge in the Scriptures, but conversing with Yovhannēs through questioning and gathering responses he adds up to his knowledge on Christianity. For this reason he commended to provide him with all the verses from the Scriptures as well as argumentations by "natural reason," which Yovhannēs collects into two voluminous chapters including them at the end of his treatise.[49]

The circumstances under which the actual polemic dialogues of Yovhannēs' rival Step'anos Daštec'i[50] transpired were strikingly different. Step'anos pursued his education at the All Savour's monastery, at the feet of Step'anos J̌ułayec'i,[51] and later he happened to study in Rome. A Catholic convert and a merchant, Step'anos roamed all over the world, from the port Bandar in the Surat region of the Mughal Empire to Italy and Holland. Despite his strong theological background, Step'anos was a

layman. He became a merchant to earn his leaving, but he never ceased being a theologian. Step'anos was a prolific author. His oeuvre includes polemical, historical, theological, philosophical treatises, sarcastic poems and conundrums.[52] His polemics was usually targeted at the "confessional others," namely Yovhannēs Mrk'uz and Armenian Catholicos Alexander J̌ułayec'i (d. 1714) for the anti-Catholic zeal they expressed in their writings. Over the years, until 1707, he wrote seven *Conversations with the Muslims*,[53] through which he responded to the interrogations of his Muslim acquaintances and counterparts about the Christian belief. A Catholic Armenian (*aktarma*), he transgressed by participating in Armenian Apostolic worship and Sacraments—*communicatio in sacris.* Once he apologised to his rivals for leaving the conversation to make his way to the Apostolic Church, for it was "Vigil of the Lord and the hour of the Armenian Liturgy (*Patarag*)."[54]

Step'anos' polemics with the Muslims is an excellent sample of actual dialogue with real interlocutors. In his travels to India, Europe, Turkey and elsewhere he was surrounded by both Christians of all denominations and Muslims of all kinds. Step'anos' interlocutors were predominantly Shiite Muslims—merchants, sheiks, converted Muslim Armenians in New Julfa. The polemic conversations could occur either in a Muslim's house, or in maydans, else he could encounter his interlocutors in caravanserais in India.[55] Functioning as oriental supra-religious and supra-ethnic "neutral zones" where all sorts of discussions on cultural matters transpired, caravanserais outside Persia and Turkey by that time could accommodate debates on religious topics. He exercised extreme cautiousness in polemics with his Muslim interlocutors attempting to steer clear of any sharp criticism of Islam. Before embarking on polemic conversation Step'anos already knew that neither him nor his interlocutors had any intention to be persuaded, hence, everyone would be keeping his truth. This attitude used to be common among the sixteenth century missionaries, who considered entering into polemics with the Muslims, "useless."[56] Interestingly, the situation changed in the seventeenth century, when Jesuit missionaries started to converse with the Muslims on *common habitus* grounds. Apparently Step'anos, lacking missionary vocation, kept holding his convictions as he referred to the polemics even with the most learned Muslims as "useless discourse" (*datarkabanut'iwn*),[57] that he would wish to escape instantly.

In *Conversations* Step'anos was interrogated by the Muslims 1. On Veracity of Christian faith; 2. On the Oneness of God (God has no

companion); 3. On Circumcision; 4. On Pure and Impure Animals; 5. On Wine; 6. On Veracity of Scriptures (Tovrat, Injil, Fġhran); 7. On the Prophecy of Muhammad; 8. On Icons; 9. On Christians turning Muslims and vice versa; 10. On Ablution and Water of Life; 11. Human Soul.

The debated topics were not novel, but some of Step'anos' argumentations were derived from personal experience going hand in hand with his time. He adjusted the vocabulary and formulations to his current context. Revamped argumentations appear in the discussions about wine, icons, conversions, ablution, etc. Speaking of disadvantages of the usage of wine he employs traditional argumentation about the pure nature and portions of wine used by Tat'ewac'i.[58] Yet, he brings up a brand new analogy of drugs (*opium, kuknarion, hashish*) that might heal the sick if taken in small portions and might poison if taken in huge amounts.[59] The conversation about Christian iconodulism takes place in interesting settings. Invited to a sheik's house to give classes on painting, upon being asked, Step'anos embarks on explaining the motives of Christians depicting human bodies, saints and the Son of God.[60]

Step'anos' *Conversations* are saturated with poetry. Poetical polemics is a unique instance in the Armenian polemical genre from the given period. The author debates with a converted Armenian *vardapet* Yovhannēs J̌ulfayec'i, bearing the Muslim name Muhammed Ali Bek. The latter was a real historical person who publicly debated with Yovhannēs Mrk'uz by the instigation of Shah Husayn.[61] The settings for Step'anos' polemics with Yovhannēs J̌ulfayec'i was the house of the former's Muslim patron in Isfahan. The Muslims kindled a theological dispute that Step'anos was willing to avoid. The uniqueness of the situations was due to the fact that it was a debate between two converts. Disputing parties were well-versed in Old and New Testaments, which enabled them to go beyond the traditional argumentation. As the dialogue evolved around the matter of ablution, Step'anos turned to poetical argumentations:

> … I want you to answer, what is the water, that God promised to Ezekiel to sprinkle upon people, for that water is holy, upon whom it is sprinkled it cleanses them from contamination, and if that water is thought to be of this [ordinary] water, that we always drink and do ablution with, find out which are the fountains and wells of [that water]!… For he does not say water, so that you might think of it to be the water that we drink or do ablution with, but [says] holy water, therefor, it ought to be another water, that would be holy and different from a simple one…

> You tell us, if that water is not this one, that we take *Ġusl* with, which water is it then, that Prophet commands [of] or what kind of water you [Christians] think it is?…
> And I with great obedience replied, said, that, "The water, that God promises through the hands of Ezekiel refers to coming holiness, that water is [the one], that starts to spring up from the preacher of Messiah Our Lord Christ, that is to say, it is the tears falling from eyes out of repentance and sedition in the hearts of people… For until the coming of our Messiah none of the prophets learned soul-purifying power of the water of tears of repentance…
> Then my aġa Mirzataġ said in a repentance form like me, "Truly it seems to me, that a teardrop grants one so much equity, while thousands of river ablutions would not suffice to grant that much purity without penitence, likewise Ḥāfeẓ utters, that …' And before his words would take an end, the son of Mirzataġ, that is Mirza Mahmad, said…[62]

Two Levels of the Polemic Dialogue: "Confessional" versus "Religious Others"

As briefly mentioned above, Step'anos Daštec'i composed an imposing refutation of Yovhannēs Mrk'uz's anti-Latin theological treatise, where he meticulously opposed every sentence in *vardapet's Brief Book on the Real and True Faith*.[63] The voluminous refutation to it, titled *Ratter of Truth*[64], was composed by Step'anos in 1715, after Yovhannēs passed. He blamed procrastination on the hectic merchant life on the roads and boats, but in fact, the reason might be behind his respect for *vardapet,* regardless of them being rivals. On the pages of *Ratter of Truth* Yovhannēs' every sentence is reiterated, juxtaposed to an objection from the Catholic douphysite viewpoint. By so doing, Step'anos imitates a tête-à-tête conversation with an actual interlocutor often times starting his objections with the expression "Archimandrite! You state that…"

The comparison of Daštec'i's Islam-related and anti-Apostolic pieces reveals the image of the "enemy" and the nuances in the attitude to religious and confessional others in the eighteenth century Armenian communities. Taking as an example the dispute around the usage of wine, a central topic in both cross-confessional and inter-religious polemics, one would divulge the shift in rhetorics of polemics when it is directed against confessional others.

The problem of wine in the inter-religious discourse had long grown out of the theological level of debate. The usage of wine by the Ottoman and Safavid Christian subjects, especially its usage during Eucharist, became a powerful socio-political tool in the hands of not only Sultans and Shahs, but also of ordinary Muslims. Eremia Çelebi imparts a number of social incidents around the issue of wine. After attending Armenian weddings Muslims would accuse the hosts of feasting during Ramadan and distributing wine to the Muslim guests, in order to solicit the 2.000 kuruș tax established for such a crime (*cürüm*), as it happened with an Armenian named Jakob from Hasköy.[65] In 1670, October 23, the pious Sultan Mehmet IV (1648-1687) prohibited the sale of alcohol across the Ottoman Empire. The usage of liquor was shortly resumed, but enriched the genre of the Armenian lamentations with a handful of new Laments on the banning of wine.[66]

At the same time, in the context of inter-confessional debates the importance of wine was related to the problem of Eucharistic mixed chalice. Miaphysite Armenian Apostolic Church never mixed wine with water in the cup of Holy Communion during the Liturgy, so characteristic to Chalcedonic Churches. Unmixed chalice was the old custom of the Armenian Church, which grew into a stumbling stone for both the Armenians and the dyophysite Churches like the Greek and Latin ones.

Polemicizing on the usage of wine with both the Muslims and Armenian Apostolics, Stepʿanos applied a different rhetoric and depth of argumentations. The comparison of the passages reveals his cautiousness to the Muslims on the one hand, and disapproval of his fellow Christians on the other:

> Polemics with the Muslims on the Usefulness and Purity of Wine
> My beloved ones! I want to ask you, what is that, that wine emerges from, that makes you call it unclean and always unclean? …Isn't it from the fruit of vine and from grapes, that every nation eats from them, and makes various dishes, that I am not willing to name.[67]

> Polemics against Yovhannēs Mrkʿuz on the Nature of Wine and Unmixed Chalice
> Archimandrid! When you say that vine begets pure wine… for nowhere is seen vine begetting wine, but rather grapes, that is a fruit full of water and emerged from water and the humidity of waters, that although by the skillfulness of men, the water is extracted from the grapes and kept until it changes its taste and they called it wine. Likewise from mulled wine

they invented a new thing called vodka (oł̇i), whence from the same grape water they made sweet vinegar and many other sorts of drinks and food.[68]

Conclusion

The Armenian manuscript tradition preserved examples of the polemics with the Muslims from the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, despite the scarcity of the material. Polemical treatises written in Persian Shiite context, on the one hand, and brief writings on social, religious and ethnic dissimilarities in the Ottoman Empire on the other, shine light on the circumstances under which polemics in real life transpired in the twofold geopolitical settings the Armenians lived in.

The shift in the image of "greater enemy" from Muslims towards Papists incited a surge of anti-Catholic Armenian polemical literature, oftentimes leaving the polemics with religious others on the margins. Along with the heuristic spirit of the confessional age the vectors as well as the fashion of polemics changed. Polemics against the Muslims turned into polemic dialogues or rather conversations with the Muslims on matters of religion and faith. The Medieval canon of polemics against the Muslims was partly applied to the Early Modern texts since most of the debated topics remained the same, while the argumentations, vocabulary, even the language, changed. The infusion of Armeno-Turkish into the polemical texts composed in the Ottoman milieu downgraded the value of theological discussion with the Muslims limiting it to the social norms of coexistence in a multi-religious environment. However, as witnessed in the polemic dialogues of Yovhannēs Mrkʻuz and Stepʻanos Daštecʻi, in the Eastern part of Armenia the theological discourse on Christian-Muslim relations managed to live up to and even exceed the Medieval standards of written polemics predominantly due to the survived culture of public debates under the conditions of *common habitus*.

Hence, the assumption about the ignorance and lack of interest of the Armenians to the religion of Muslim rulers seems to suffer from laxity. The Armenians did express interest in Islam, they were simply not keen on disputations with the Muslims that could lead either to detention and bloodshed, or prove to be "useless".

NOTES

1 The database has been built within the ERC project OTTOCONFESSION. A more complete editable and user-friendly database will be accessible after the end of the project.

2 Books of questions extant in Early modern Armenian manuscript culture might be devided into two categories. The first, inherited from early Medieval times, is the voluminous compendia *Book of Questions* discussing sophisticated theological issues and being copied throughout the centuries. The second category appearing under the same title consists of vernacular writings in form of questions and answers encapsulating a wide range of theological, orthopractical, folk medical and other questions. Anti-Muslim passages from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are to be found predominantly in the latter category.

3 The corpus of Armenian neo-martyrologies has been published in the early twentieth century. *Hayocʻ nor vkanerə (1155-1843)* [*Armenian New Martyrs (1155-1843)*], ed. Hrachya Acharyan and Yakob Manandyan, (Vagharshapat, 1903). A handful of neo-martyrologies has been rendered into English. See Peter Cowe, "Vrtʻanēs Sṛnkecʻi" in *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History*, vol. 10 (Ottoman and Safavid Empires 1600–1700), ed. D. Thomas and J. Chesworth, (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 57-67. Peter Cowe, "Martyrology of Loys Grigor," in *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History*, vol. 12 (Asia, and the Americas 1700-1800), ed. D. Thomas and J. Chesworth, (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 324-330; Idem "Stepʻanos Kafayecʻi", ibid, 350-354, etc.

4 Seta Dadoian, *The Armenians in the Medieval Islamic World: Paradigms of Interaction Seventh to Fourteenth Centuries,* Volume 3, Medieval Cosmopolitanism and Images of Islam, Thirteenth to Fourteenth Centuries, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2014), 183.

5 For the go-between Armenian merchants see Sebuh Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa*, (Berkley, New York, London: California University Press, 2011).

6 Ute Lotz-Heumann, M. Pohlig, "Confessionalization and Literature in the Empire, 1555–1700," *Central European History,* 40 (2007), 35–61.

7 Tijana Krstić,"From *Shahāda* to *ʻAqīda*: Confession to Islam, Catechization and Sunnitization in Sixteenth-century Ottoman Rumeli" in *Islamisation: Comparative Perspectives from History,* ed. A.C.S. Peacock, (Edinburgh: University Press, 2017), 296-314.

8 Derin Terzioğlu, "How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization: A Historiographical Discussion," *Turcica* 44 (2012-13), 301-38. Idem, "Where Catechism Meets *Ilm-i hal*: Islamic Manuals of Religious Instruction in the

Ottoman Empire in the Age of Confessionalization," *Past and Present,* 220/1 (2013), 79-114.

9 Eremia Çelebi K'ēōmiwrčean, *Nengut'iwn maxanac' tačkac' ar· k'ristoneays [Guile of the Spite of Tajiks,]*. V509, f. 234r-264r.

10 Eremia's writing is divided into five hierarchically structured parts. He starts with the description of and warnings about the lawless strategies of Muslim rulers to Christians' conversions and ends with the behaviour of ordinary Muslims describing their deceitful conversion strategies.

11 The author likens Muslims with the biblical serpent. Like the hatred of the serpent for the mankind cannot be elevated, so the hatred of the Muslims for the Christians cannot be ceased (եթե օձին թշնամութիւն ի բաց մերժիլ մարթասցի ի մարդկանէ, այսպէս և տաճկաց թշնամութիւն ի բաց բառնալ կարիցէ ի քրիստոնէից): V509, f. 225v.

12 John Flannery, *The Mission of the Portuguese Augustinians to Persia and Beyond (1602-1747)*, (Brill, 2013), 111-147. Christian Windler, "Ambiguous Belonging: How Catholic Missionaries in Persia and the Roman Curia dealt with Communicatio in Sacris" in *A Companion to Early Modern Catholic Global Missions*, ed. Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia, (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2018), 205-234.

13 Małakia Ormanian, *Azgapatum* [Narratives of the Nation], vol. 2, (Constantinople, 1914), 2410-2417, 2439-2443, 2476-2481, 2533-2538, 2591-2596, etc.

14 On Jesuit accommodationist strategies see Ines Županov, "One Civility, but Multiple Religions: Jesuit Mission among St. Thomas Christians in India (16th-17th Centuries)", *Journal of Early Modern History,* 9/3-4 (2005), 284-288.

15 On communicatio in sacris see Guillaume Aral, *Les Arméniens Catholiques: Étude historique, juridique et institutionnelle XVIIe- XVIIIe siècle; suivi Les Mythes de la Christianistion de l'Arménie*, (Les Édition de Nichéphore, 2017), 104-112. Cesare Santus, "La communicatio in sacris con gli "scismatici" orientali in età moderna" in *Les Mélanges de l'École française de Rome*, 2014, (https://journals.openedition.org/mefrim/1790#tocto1n2).

16 For the text of Hatt-ı Şerif see Motraye A., de la, *Travels through Europe, Asia and into Part of Africa*, vol. 1, (London, 1723), 393-394. For the details, see ibid, 159.

17 Cornel Zwierlein, *Imperial Unknowns: the French and English in the Mediterranean, 1650-1750*, (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 118-136.

18 Zwierlein, *Imperial*.

19 Petros Aragonac'i, *Girk' datastanac' [*Book of Judgment*]*, M484, f. 323r-327r.

20 Aragonac'i, *Girk'*.

21 Michel Febvre, *Praecipuae objectiones quad virgo solent fieri per modum interrogationis a Mahumeticae legos sectoribus, Judaeis, et haereticis*

Orientalibus adversus catholicos earumque solutiones, (Rome: Typis de Propaganda Fide, 1679). Arabic translation was published by Propaganda in 1680, Armenian translation in 1681. For biographical and bibliographical overview see, Bernard Heyberger, "Justinien de Neuvy, dit Michel Febvre," Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History. Volume 9 (Western and Southern Europe 1600-1700), ed. D. Thomas and J. Chesworth, (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 579-588.

22 Bernard Heyberger, "Polemic Dialogues between Christians and Muslims in the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient,* 55 (2012), 495-516.

23 Michel Febvre, *Praecipuae (Armenian translation),* 13-53.

24 Bernard Heyberger, "Polemic Dialogues," 503.

25 Heyberger, "Polemic", 513.

26 For the Cycle of Muhammad's life see Dadoian, *The Armenians,* 163-187.

27 *Otanawor sowt margarēin Mahmēti [A poem on false prophet Muhammad]*, V242 (545), f. 222r-v. A versified enlarged variant of it has survived in a manuscript copy from the seventeenth century: Այս Մահմատ սուտ մարգարէ, //Ի հագարու իսմայէլեան //Քանզի նման է սա մկան,// Որ սատակմամբ պղծէր զթան: // This false prophet Muhammad // From the Ishmaelite Hagar // As he resembles a mouse // That contaminates milk with its pegging out… V278 (477), f. 77r-v.

28 Biographical and bibliographical overview in Sergio La Porta, "Gregory of Tatʿew" in: *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History,* vol. 5 (1350-1500), ed. David Thomas and Alexander Mallet, (Brill, 2013), 229-238.

29 Grigor Tatʿewacʿi,"Ĕnddēm Tačkacʿ" in Babken Kyuleserian, *Islamĕ Hay Grakanutʿean mēǰ [Islam in Medieval Armenian Literature and Excerpts from the Kashun]*, (Vienna: Mxitʿarists, 1930); French translation by Frederic Macler, "L'Islam dans la litterature arménienne," *Revue des Études Arméniennes*, 1 (1932), 493–522.

30 I follow Dadoian's translation with couple of exceptions. Dadoian, *The Armenian*, 205-206.

31 For the tradition of Siwnikʿ monastic schools see *Armenian Gospel Iconography. The Tradition of the Glajor Gospel,* ed. Thomas F. Mathews and Avedis K. Sanjian, (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1991), 14-67.

32 Babken Kyuleserian, *Islamĕ Hay Grakanutʿean mēǰ,* 156. Here and elsewhere I do not provide the Armenian text due to space constraints.

33 Sergio La Porta, "The Fourteenth-Century Armenian Polemic against Judaism and its Latin Source," *Le Muséon*, 122 (2009), 93-129.

34 Seta Dadoian, "Islam and Armenian Polemical Strategies at the End of an Era: Mattʿēos J̌ułayecʿi and Grigor Tatʿewacʿi," *Le Muséon*, 114 (2001), 305-326.

35 The surge of catechisms and brief confessions of faith in the seventeenth century played not the least role in the shift to dialogue polemics.

36 Here I use the term as coined by Bernard Heyberger. *Common habitus* in Herberger's understanding distinguishes social status and should not be confused with Pierre Bourdieu's usage of the word.

37 Khalifa Sultan occupied the office of grand vizier during the reigns of Shah Abbas I, Shah Sefi and Shah Abbas II.

38 Denis Halft, "Paolo Piromalli," in *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History*, vol. 10 (Ottoman and Safavid Empires 1600–1700), ed. D. Thomas and J. Chesworth, (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 518–523.

39 See VAT Pers. 49. Dennis Halft argues that the treatise was originally composed in Persian and later translated into Latin by the author himself, and into Armenian by Barseł Holov, see Vat. Borg. Arm 40, /II/1, f. 1r-158v; M672, 91 fols.

40 A variant of Armenian translation/adaptation was published in 1674. *Yałags čšmartut'ean k'ristoneakani aṙ Šah Appas ark'ayn Parsic' i Połosē P'iromalyē kargēn k'arozołac' vardapetē ev arhiepiskaposē Naxijewanay nahangin šaradreal [On the veracity of Christianity to the king Shah Abbas, composed by Paolo Piromalli OP, archimandrite and archbishop of Nakhijevan]*, (Rome: Apud Paulum Monetam, 1674). In the Armenian translation some of Piromalli's objections against Miaphysits, ie. Armenians are amended.

41 Ով իմ սիրելի Ղէնսիգատէ Նեյմէթուլահ չելեպի; M1635, f. 57v-60r.

42 "Patmut'iwn Ełiay k'ahanayi," *Ararat* 2 (1909), 156-168.

43 "Patmut'iwn", 156.

Armeno-Turkish had gradually become instrumental for the indoctrination of the Armenian populace in the age of confession-building. Since the late seventeenth century it became introduced into the inter-confessional polemical writings composed exceptionally in the Ottoman milieu. Due to the scarcity of anti-Islamic Armenian polemical writings in the Ottoman Empire, finding traces of its usage in literary polemics with the Muslims turns out to be infeasible.

44 For Yovhannēs Mrk'uz's biography and bibliography see Denis Halft, "Hovhannēs Mrk'uz Julayec'i" in *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History*, vol. 12 (Asia, and the Americas 1700-1800), ed. D. Thomas and J. Chesworth, (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 260-265.

45 The book has survived in couple of manuscript copies. Its lengthy Armenian version was published in 1797. See Yovhannēs Mrk'uz, *Girk' patmut'ean arareal i Norn J'ułayow Srboy Amnap'rkč'i gerahraš vani miaban Yovhannēs čgnazgeac' vardapetin vičabanut'iwn aṙ Šah Slēmann Parsic', [Book of the History: Polemical Book to Shah Suleiman of Persia by the Monk of the Splendid [All Saviour's] Monastery vardapet Yovhannēs the hermit: Composed in the All Saviour's monastery],* (Calcutta, 1797).

46 Yovhannēs Mrkʻuz, *Hakačaṙutʻiwn ənd despan patri Samsonin [Polemics with the Ambassador pater Samson]*, M727, f. 114.

47 Yovhannēs Mrkʻuz, *Girkʻ patmutʻean,* 1-2.

48 Mrkʻuz, *Girkʻ*, 9.

49 Mrkʻuz, *Girkʻ,* 140-274.

50 A brief communication on Daštecʻi see in *A Reference Guide to Modern Armenian Literature, 1500-1920: With an Introductory History*, ed. Kevork B. Bardakjian, Detroit, 2000, 66-67.

51 Stepʻanos Daštecʻi, M781, f. 29r, cf. M9049, f. 5r.

52 For his bibliography see R. Abrahamian, "Stepʻanos Daštecʻi", *Bulletin of NAASSR*, 12 (1956),105-106.

53 Stepʻanos Daštecʻi, J346, f. 187-257. Most of them were published by Hrachik Mirzoyan in *Banber Erevani Hamalsarani,* 3/87 (1995), 106-119; *Banber Erevani Hamalsarani* 3/93 (1997), 89-100; *Banber Erevani Hamalsarani* 3/129, (2009) 113-138.

54 Stepʻanos Daštecʻi, J346, f. 239.

55 On caravanserais in the seventeenth century see Jean Chardin, "Voyage en Pers," in: *Collection Choisie des Voyages Autour du Monde et dans les Contrées les plus Curieuses du Globe depuis Christope Colomb jusquʻa Nos Jours*, par William Smith, vol 10, (Paris: Chez Paul Renouard, 1930), 98-100. John Baptista Tavernier, *The SixVoyages: Persian Travels*, (London, 1678), 45.

56 Emanuele Colombo, "Jesuits and Islam in Seventeenth-Century Europe: War, Preaching and Conversions," in *Lʻ Islam Visto da Occidente: Cultura e religione del Seicento europeo di fronte allʻIslam,* ed. Bernard Heyberger et. al., (Milan: Marietti, 2009), 327-328.

57 Stepʻanos Daštecʻi, *Vičabanutʻiwn ənddēm Yōhannēs Jˇulfayecʻwoy* [*Polemics with Hovhannes of Julfa*], J346, f. 231. See also Hrachik Mirzoyan, "Stepʻanos Daštecʻu «Zruycʻ-banavečeri» patmamšakutʻayin aržekʻě" [The Value of Stepanos Sashtetsiʻs Polemic Conversations], *Banber Erevani Hamalsarani,* 3/87 (1995), 114.

58 Babken Kyuleserian, *Islamĕ Hay Grakanutʻean mēj,* 156-157.

59 Stepʻanos Daštecʻi, *Harcʻumn inčʻ vasn ginwoyn [Interrogation concerting wine]*, J346, f. 223-225. See also, Hrachik Mirzoyan, Stepʻanos Daštecʻu «Zruycʻ-banavečeri» patmamšakutʻayin aržekʻě", *Banber Erevani Hamalsarani,* 3/87 (1995), 110.

60 Stepʻanos Daštecʻi, J346, f. 228-231. Hrachik Mirzoyan, *Banber Erevani Hamalsarani,* 3/87 (1995), 110, 111-114.

61 Xačʻatur Jˇułayecʻi, *Patmutʻiwn Parsicʻ, [History of Persians]*, (Vagharshapat, 1905), 168. See excessive footnote in Mirzoyan's article in *Banber Erevani Hamalsarani,* 3/87 (1995), 107-108, ft nr. 1.

62 Stepʻanos Daštecʻi, *Vičabanutʻiwn ənddēm Yōhannēs Jˇulfayecʻwoy,*J346, f. 237-239. Mirzoyan, *Banber Erevani Hamalsarani,* 3/87 (1995), 117-118.

63 Yovhannēs Mrkʻuz, *Girkʻ hamaṙōt vasn iskapes ev čšmarit hawatoy, dawanutʻean ułłapʻaṙ katʻułikē ĕntʻanur hayastaneaycʻ ekełecʻwoy [Brief book on the real and true faith of the doctrine of orthodox catholic universal Armenian church]*, (New Julfa, 1688).

64 Stepʻanos Daštecʻi, *Kočʻnak čšmartutʻean* [Clapper of Truth], M8111, cf. M9049.

65 V509, f. 250r.

66 V256 (578), f. 57v-59v.

67 Stepʻanos Daštecʻi, *Harcʻumn inčʻ vasn ginwoyn* [Some Interrogations about Wine], J346, f. 223. Mirzoyan, *Banber Erevani Hamalsarani,* 3/87 (1995), 109.

68 Daštecʻi, *Kočʻnak,* M8111, f. 133r.

Abbreviations for the Manuscript Catalogues

J – Jerusalem, Armenian Patriarchate

M – Yerevan, Matenadaran

V – Venice, Mekhitarist Library

VAT Borg. Arm. – Vatican, Bibliotheca Apostolica, Borgiani Armenian Manuscript Fund

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‘MIMICKING’ THE WEST? RUSSIA’S LEGITIMIZATION DISCOURSE FROM GEORGIA WAR TO THE ANNEXATION OF CRIMEA

Abstract

The 2008 Georgia war represented a turning point in Russian foreign policy. It was for the first time since the dissolution of the Soviet Union when Moscow invaded an independent country and for the first time when two members of the Council of Europe fought against each other. A premiere for post-Soviet Russian foreign policy was also registered in 2014. The annexation of Crimea represented the first incorporation of foreign territories by Moscow since the WWII. These two events determined the West to protest and blatantly contradict Russia’s foreign policy discourse centered around the respect for states’ sovereignty and equality of actors in the international system.

Starting from the assertion that the formulation of Russia’s foreign policy is determined by the West’s international behavior – Moscow looking whether to emulate or to find alternatives to it, the present paper will compare Russia’s legitimization arguments for the 2008 war and the 2014 annexation of Crimea trying to assess how Moscow positions itself towards the criticism of the West and whether there is a continuity in Russian official legimization narratives.

Keyworlds: legitimization, Russian foreign policy, annexation of Crimea, 2008 Georgia war, emulation.

Introduction

Since the beginning of the 90s, there have been a number of conflicts in the former Soviet space Russia has been involved in – the one between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabkh; the secessionist wars of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia; or the Transnistrian war in the Republic of Moldova. However, Moscow has not recognized its direct involvement in any of these conflicts, posing every time as mediator or ‘peacekeeper’. From this point of view, the five-day war of August 2008

between Russia and Georgia differed considerably from the previous conflicts in the former Soviet space. Even if both Tbilisi and Moscow claimed that they were the innocent party (Killingsworth 2012: 228), neither denied direct involvement in the war.

The war in Georgia started on the night of 7-8 August, when the world's attention was directed towards the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics. The precise details of the outbreak of the military conflict is a substantial study in itself - the parties involved accusing each other of having started the war, and competing in justification of their military involvement. Russia insists that "[Russian peacekeepers] were attacked first"; while Tbilisi claims that its operations against Tskhinvali followed both the bombardment of ethnic Georgian villages by South Ossetian forces and the Russian invasion of Georgian territory via the Roki tunnel that connects North Ossetia in the Russian Federation with South Ossetia in Georgia (Allison 2009: 176).

After five days of fighting, on 12 August, Russian President Medvedev met French President Sarkozy who was also the president in office of the Council of the EU, and approved a ceasefire agreement. The document was signed by Georgia and Russia on 15 August in Tbilisi and 16 August in Moscow. Russia withdrew the majority of its troops from Georgia, except for those from Abkhazia and South Ossetia, including the territories that were controlled by Tbilisi before the war. On 26 August 2008, Russian President Medvedev signed the decrees recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, based on the "free will of Abkhaz and Ossetian peoples" and motivated his decision as being "the only possibility to save human lives" (Medvedev 2008c). Besides Russia, the two breakaway regions were recognized by Venezuela, Nicaragua, Nauru, Vanuatu and Tuvalu, the last two subsequently withdrawing their recognition. The status of the two secessionist regions has since remained frozen. In 2014 and in 2015 respectively, Moscow signed special agreements with Abkhazia and South Ossetia that envisage the creation of a common space of defense and security between the separatist regions and Russia (Rotaru 2016: 174).

While in the case of the 2008 war in Georgia, Russia "innovated" its foreign policy in the former Soviet space by recognizing the independence of the secessionist regions, in 2014, in Ukraine, Moscow went even further, by annexing a foreign territory. The events in Crimea occurred within the context of Euromaidan and the fleeing of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych to Russia. At the end of February 2014, the pro-Russian forces,

military men without insignia, the so-called "little green men," started taking control of the Crimean peninsula, seizing its strategic institutions. Moscow claimed that the "little green men" were local "self-defence" forces over whom Russia had no authority. However, in that period around 5,500-6,000 Russian soldiers together with their weapons had been transferred to Crimea from the Russian Federation, the evidence showing that together with the Crimean Self-Defence they contributed to the occupation of the strategic infrastructure on the peninsula (Wilk 2014).

On 6 March 2014, the Crimean Parliament voted for the unification with the Russian Federation and ten days later organized a referendum, asking the local population whether they wanted to reunite with Russia as a subject of the Federation or whether they wanted the restoration of the Crimean Constitution of 1992 and the preservation of the Crimea as part of Ukraine. The status quo was excluded from the voting. According to Crimean and Russian official data, 96.77% of the 83.1% of population that took part in the referendum were in favor of joining Russia (RT, 2014), while according to the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People, that boycotted the referendum, there were only between 30 and 40% of those who voted during the referendum (ukrinform.ua, 2014), which would mean that only 29% - 38.7% of the Crimean population voted in favor of joining Russia.

The following day after the referendum, the Crimean parliament declared the independence of the Ukrainian peninsula and asked Moscow to admit it as a new subject of the Russian Federation. On 18 March 2014, Russian President Putin and the Crimean leaders signed the "Agreement on the incorporation of the Republic of Crimea into the Russian Federation" (kremlin.ru, 2014), the presidential decree in this regard being signed on 21 March 2014. These actions of Russia represented a severe infringement of international law and a great challenge for the post WWII European security order based on sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of states (Mogherini 2016).

Both in 2008 and in 2014, Russia violated a series of international treaties and disregarded the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of its neighbouring countries. Yet, each time, Moscow rejected the criticism and tried to legitimize its actions both in the eyes of its citizens and of the foreign audiences. Within this context, the present paper will conduct a comparative analysis between Russia's 2008 and 2014 justification narratives with the aim of assessing the way the arguments were constructed and the rationale behind the development and prioritization of one or another narrative element. The article argues that there is

continuity in Moscow's 2008 and 2014 legitimization arguments, and that the invocation of the West plays a central role in Russia's justification endeavours.

As my main goal is to identify and compare the elements of Russia's legitimization narratives after the war in Georgia and the annexation of Crimea, I found the qualitative content analysis to best fit the research purposes. As such, I have collected, analyzed and interpreted the content of official documents; speeches and statements of Russian main foreign policy makers – the President, the Prime-Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Russia's representatives to the UN, OSCE, etc. The analyzed documents cover the period 2008 – 2016. In the first stage of the research I have identified the main patterns of Russia's legitimization narrative for the war in Georgia; and then, for the annexation of Crimea. After that, by conducting an "intensive analysis" (Merriam 1989: 126), I have looked at how the arguments were constructed and evolved and I have scrutinized the similarities and differences between the two narratives.

The article is divided into three parts. It starts with a theoretical scrutiny of the Russian foreign policy approach towards the Western norms and values. In this part I have been interested in how Moscow stands in relation to the West from the perspective of the legitimization mechanisms for its actions in the former Soviet space. The next section analyzes the legitimization arguments used by Moscow in the contexts of the war in Georgia and the annexation of Crimea. I identified the main patterns and scrutinized the way the arguments were developed and prioritised in Russian official narratives. And finally, I compared the two legitimization narratives, assessing the commonalities and the limits of resemblance.

The Role of the West in the Formulation of Russian Foreign Policy

The positioning towards the West has played a central role in the formulation of the Russian Federation's foreign policy. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Moscow has identified itself as being part of the community of Western states. The 'feelings' towards the West have varied over time from emulation to contestation, however, post-Soviet Moscow has always looked at the West's international behavior to guide its own external actions. The first years of post-Soviet Russia (during Kozyrev's tenure as foreign minister) represented the most enthusiastic phase of

Russia's relationship with the West. Moscow was trying to fully emulate the Western model of governance. Russia was seemingly following a mimetic approach, a form of learning in which Russian society started copying the Western one in order to adapt its norms and standards of behavior. In other words, Russia was reduced to the status of 'pupil' and the West became the teacher (Sakwa 2013: 207).

Yet, shortly, disappointed that the '90s economic reforms did not bring the expected prosperity, and frustrated by the loss of its international prestige, Moscow started to blame the West for its failures. However, despite this revolt, the Western model has continued to guide the formulation of Russia's foreign policy. Vladimir Putin embraced the vision of Russia as part of the West and articulated the European dimension as especially prominent in his foreign policy. At the basis of his vision has been his conviction that "Russia is and will be a major European power". Vladimir Putin clearly highlighted in his programmatic speech delivered to the Federation Council in March 2005 that he sees Russia moving toward the same values shared by other in the European continent, namely "the ideal of freedom, human rights, justice and democracy" (Tsygankov 2007: 385). Vladimir Putin reiterated these stances in his 2012 article "Russia and the changing world" that presented his foreign policy vision for the next presidential mandate: "Russia is an integral, organic part of Greater Europe, of great European civilization. Our citizens feel that they are Europeans" (Putin 2012).

As Morozov argues, Russian policy makers have always been careful to emphasize the commonality of values and interests with Western countries, even when harshly criticizing the Western abuses of those shared ideals (Morozov 2013: 22) Russia still considers itself as part of this community of states. Moscow has often used the references to Western norms and practices to legitimize political choices, even the most illiberal one. For instance, in the case of the bid to justify the systematic suppression of public protests in major Russian cities, President Putin was arguing that the limitation of the space for public activities not directly controlled by the authorities was in line with the presumably incontestable Western norms: "Look, in London they have assigned one place [for political demonstrations]"; the disproportionate fines and prison terms for the smallest violations of public order by people exercising their right to public assembly were justified by references to "practices common to all European countries"; and the bill that compels all NGOs receiving funding from foreign sources and engaging in any political activities to

declare themselves "foreign agents" was motivated as taking the model of the U.S. Foreign Agents Registration Act (Morozov 2013: 21). Thus, for Morozov, Russia is a subaltern actor, almost completely dependent on the West in both economic and normative terms (Morozov 2013: 16). The author continues by arguing that in order to legitimate any political move, Russia's leaders have to refer to the common European values and interests as it has no other sources of legitimacy other than repeated references to the universal values of the "civilized world" (Morozov 2013: 24-24).

Yet, while Moscow is looking at the West for legitimizing its policies, Sakwa remarks that throughout history Russia's engagement with the West has been accompanied by a permanent fear of adaptive mimesis – not to lose its own 'authentic' identity (Sakwa 2013: 207). This tension between adaptation and authenticity has been manifested through the opposition between the Westernizer and Slavophile worldviews in Russian foreign policy, which is in line with Tsygankov's codification of Russian worldview philosophies. The latter identified three persistent patterns in Moscow's foreign policy thinking and behavior that have been developed and determined over time by the established images of the country and the outside world - Westernist, Statist, and Civilizationist. The Westernizers highlight the similarity of Russia with the West and perceive the West as the most viable and progressive civilization in the world. The Civilizationists argue that Russian values are different from those of the West and seek to spread them abroad, outside the West, with predilection in the former Soviet space. The Statists are not inherently anti-western, however, they argue that liberal values should be established to strengthen not weaken the state. The last school of thought has dominated Russian foreign policy since the mid-2000s (see more in Tsygankov 2013, pp 4-9).

Tsygankov (2013) considers that even if Russia's foreign policy has been formulated in response to various international contexts, it has nevertheless displayed a remarkable degree of historical continuity. Even after the annexation of Crimea, Tsygankov (2015) argued that Russia's recent actions in Ukraine demonstrate both change and continuity in its foreign policy. The scholar considers that the assertiveness of Vladimir Putin's foreign policy is meant to signal that the Kremlin views revolutions in the former Soviet space (e.g. the Euromaidan) as the West's attempts to undermine Moscow's role and status in Eurasia and insists on Russia being treated as an equal partner in relations with the United States and the European Union (Tsygankov 2015, 280). However, this does not signal that Moscow is distancing itself from the Western norms.

Within this context, assessing Russia's 2008 and 2013 Foreign Policy Doctrines, Morozov observes that even if the documents that present the main lines of Moscow's foreign policy criticize the Western countries for trying to "dominate the world economy and politics", it is still insisted that the various models of development, Russian included, are "based on the universal principles of democracy and the market economy". This official discourse, demonstrates thus that even when opposes the West, Russia cannot present a meaningful alternative and uses the language of liberal democracy to voice its concerns (Morozov 2013: 22).

In other words, Russia's 'neo-revisionism' should not be understood as meant to generate new rules, or establish a new international order. It is rather a form of practical diplomacy "where its foreign policy autonomy (and of other rising powers) constrains the freedom of manoeuvre of the old dominant constellation" (Sakwa 3013: 215). In sum, Russia's reproving foreign policy discourse towards the West does not generate a substantive alternative (Sakwa 2013: 221), the western norms and values continuing to be the reference for Moscow's legitimization arguments for its domestic and foreign policies.

Yet, if western norms and values underlie Russia's domestic and international behavior, how does Russia explain its 2008 and 2014 actions in the former Soviet space? The following parts of the article will look at the way Russia has justified the invasion of Georgia and the annexation of Crimea trying to find out whether there are commonalities between the 2008 and 2014 legitimization discourses.

Legitimizing a War

The invasion of Georgia and the subsequent recognition of the independence of the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia were justified by Russian political elites through a series of arguments framed into international and domestic law, and/or aimed to create emotions. From the beginning of the conflict Russia had argued that its intervention in Georgia was determined by a *humanitarian rationale*. In the 8 August 2008 speech, President Medvedev assessed that Russian troops had to take action in order to protect, on the one hand, the Russian peacekeepers that would had been attacked by Georgian peacekeepers, and on the other, the civilian population in South Ossetia, "civilians,

women, children, and old people" the majority of whom "[were] citizens of the Russian Federation" (Medvedev 2008a). As the events developed, the tone of the Russian leader became even worse. During the 12 August 2008 speech (when the ceasefire was agreed) President Medvedev accused Georgian authorities of having killed "thousands of citizens, which cannot be called in any other way but genocide," and of conducting ethnic cleansing in South Ossetia. He also highlighted that if Russia had not intervened "the death toll would have been much higher" (Medvedev 2008b). The deputy minister of foreign affairs, Grigory Karasin, assessed that even if the world genocide carried an emotional component, it was exactly what happened in Georgia: "South Ossetia was attacked on a national basis. We perceive it so" (Karasin 2008). And as Georgia "committed barbaric aggression" and "the current Georgian regime does not correspond in any way to the high standards", Russia's recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia "was the only possibility for ensuring not merely their security, but also the very survival of our fraternal peoples in the face of the chauvinistic course that had repeatedly manifested itself since the government of Gamsakhurdia," when the slogan "Georgia for Georgians" was used by his followers (Lavrov 2008a). The invocation of the name of Gamsakhurdia, the first president of post-Soviet Georgia, has been present in many post-2008 war discourses of Russian politicians (e.g. Lavrov 2008a, Lavrov 2008b, Karasin 2008, Azimov 2008, etc.) This had an instrumental role in supporting Russia's argument that its intervention was determined by the 'genocide' Tbilisi was committing in South Ossetia, which would have been a continuation of the Georgian chauvinistic policy from the beginning of the 90s that led to civil inter-ethnic violence. Therefore, by militarily intervening in Georgia, Moscow "protected the rights of citizens of those republics to life and development" (Lavrov 2008a). "In South Ossetia, Russia defended the highest of our common values, the highest of all human rights - the right to life" (Lavrov 2008b).

Then, Moscow argued that the recognition of the independence of the two regions was the only solution: "we cannot guarantee that South Ossetia and Abkhazia will even survive, if you do not recognize them as independent states" (Lavrov 2009). "After what happened in Tskhinvali and was planned in Abkhazia, they have the right to decide for themselves", "this is the only possibility to save human lives" (Medvedev 2008c).

Even if Abkhazia was not subjected to Georgian military action in 2008, Moscow argued that if it had not intervened there, the region

would have had a similar fate as South Ossetia because against it "a military provocation was prepared" (Lavrov 2008a). Russia's permanent representative to the UN, Vitaly Churkin, argued that it was "documented that after South Ossetia, the aggression of Georgia against Abkhazia was planned" and that "Abkhazians, not being crazy, could not wait that after South Ossetia, Georgians attack them too" (Churkin 2008). Neither Churkin, nor any other Russian official has provided any proof in this regard though; the legitimization of Russia's intervention in Abkhazia being, thus, based on assumptions and not on facts.

The humanitarian argument played a significant role in sensitizing both the foreign and domestic audiences. The Kremlin insisted on the fact that "among the dead were the Russian peacekeepers, who gave their lives in fulfilling their duty to protect women, children and the elderly" (Medvedev 2008c) and that the Kremlin had no other option but to send its troops as, according to the Constitution and the federal laws, it is the "duty [of the President] to protect the lives and dignity of Russian citizens wherever they may be" and in South Ossetia were dying "civilians, women, children, old people, and most of them - the citizens of the Russian Federation" (Medvedev 2008a). On the other side, South Ossetia "could not ask NATO for help and addressed Russia. Because Russia has the mission to take care of the security of the Caucasian peoples" (Churkin 2008). This part of the argument based on the provisions of the domestic rules was used only at the beginning of the Georgia war, the focus being further shifted on the provisions of the international law.

The second most used legitimizing argument by Moscow was the *legal factor*. In this case, the official narrative was constructed around the assessment that Russia acted in Georgia totally in accordance with the international law. It would have intervened there at the beginning to protect the lives of the Russian peacekeepers that would have been attacked by their Georgian comrades. Moscow argued that when Georgian forces launched an attack on "sleeping" Tskhinvali, Georgian peacekeepers serving in one contingent with their Russian colleagues, would have joined the Georgian army and would have started killing their Russian comrades in arms. And Russia "could not put up with it" (Lavrov 2009). By militarily intervening, Moscow "put into practice the human security principle, the principle of responsibility to protect and [made] it in strict compliance with article 51 of the UN Charter" (Lavrov 2009). Within this context, the Russian foreign minister reminded also the 1989 US intervention in Panama, that was decided by President Bush senior

"after one US soldier was killed, another wounded, the third beat, and his wife was sexually assaulted" (Lavrov 2009), suggesting that Russia's intervention in Georgia was more 'entitled' by comparison with the West's motives for previous interventions.

The Kremlin accused Georgia of violating the UN Charter and other obligations Tbilisi had under international agreements "and contrary to common sense, unleashed an armed conflict victimizing innocent civilians" underlining that the military provocations, the attack of the peacekeepers – "grossly violated the regime established in conflict zones with the support of the UN and the OSCE" (Medvedev 2008c). Dmitri Medvedev stressed also that "when international rules are violated, the state and the entire international society must react in an adequate way" (Medvedev 2008c).

The recognition of the independence of the two breakaway regions by Russia was also motivated by appealing to the international law. The right to self-determination was invoked and it was claimed that the 'democratic' procedure was followed by the local 'authorities': the 'presidents' of Abkhazia and South Ossetia addressed Russia for the recognition of their 'states' based on the results of referendums and decisions of national parliaments; and the free will of the Ossetian and Abkhaz peoples were guided by the provisions of the UN Charter, the 1970 Declaration on the Principles of International Law Governing Friendly Relations Between States, the CSCE Helsinki Final Act of 1975, and other fundamental international documents (Medvedev 2008c). Foreign minister Lavrov went further by arguing that the essence of the 1970 Declaration was that "the state's right to territorial integrity is due to its obligation to respect the right to self-determination and development of all peoples living on its territory." Thus, by the "aggression against South Ossetia […] the shelling of a peaceful sleeping city and the preparation of a similar blitzkrieg against Abkhazia […] President Saakashvili himself has destroyed the territorial integrity of his state" (Lavrov 2008a). It was a "crime against its own people, because the violence was directed against the people Saakashvili earlier called citizens of its country" (Lavrov 2009). This way, he "dashed all hopes for the peaceful coexistence of Ossetians, Abkhazians and Georgians in a single state" (Medvedev 2008c).

Within this context, Moscow tried to sensitize the ordinary Georgians, by underlining that "one should not confuse the regime of Saakashvili with the Georgian people, to whom we entertain a sincere feeling of friendship and sympathy" (Lavrov 2008a). President Medvedev directly

accused Saakashvili of having chosen genocide for achieving his political goals – "the most inhuman way to accomplish its objective - annexing South Ossetia trough the annihilation of a whole people" (Medvedev 2008c) and drew the attention of the using of double standards by the West: "when someone who commits the murder of thousands of lives is characterized as a terrorist and a bastard, and the other - as the legally elected president of a sovereign state," adding that "the 'hooligans' differ from normal people namely by the fact that when they smell blood, it is very difficult to stop them" (Medvedev 2008b). "I consider him a war criminal" (Medvedev 2013).

Lavrov argued also that Russia acted in Georgia in accordance with the right to self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter, "as the object of the barbaric aggression of Tbilisi were Russian peacekeepers and Russian citizens" (Lavrov 2008c, Lavrov 2008b). This argument was reiterated by Vladimir Putin as well: "What do you want us to do? Wave our penknives in the air and wipe the bloody snot off our noses? When an aggressor comes into your territory, you need to punch him in the face" (Putin 2008). Yet, these statements are "unconvincing rationale for the sweeping Russian military action that followed" and legally unjustified as "at least in principle, the Russian forces were there not as representatives of Russia but as members of the Joint Peacekeeping Forces" (Alison 2009: 178). On the other side, even if these statements question the sovereignty of Georgia, Russian foreign minister gave assurances that Russia had no claims over someone else's territory and reaffirmed Moscow's commitment to the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual respect, non-aggression, non-interference in the domestic affairs of states, the indivisibility of security (Lavrov 2008b).

Even if not a central argument, the *Kosovo precedent* entered Russia's 2008 legitimization discourse too. In an interview for *Der Spiegel* magazine, foreign minister Lavrov assessed the situation of Kosovo as being similar in appearance with that of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, even if the West is approaching these cases differently. He also underlined that Belgrade respected the 1244 UN resolution that stopped the war in Kosovo, and no one put pressure on, no one was attacking anymore the Albanian population, which was not the case in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. "In other words, there was no reason for the Kosovo declaration of independence" (Lavrov 2009). By comparison, Russia's ambassador to the UN underlined that Abkhazia and South Ossetia have much more historical and legal grounds to be recognized than Kosovo. "Kosovo is

the historical heart of Serbia which is the case of neither Abkhazia nor of South Ossetia in their relationship with Georgia" (Churkin 2008). In other words, the secession of Georgia's breakaway regions would have been 'more entitled' than that of Western-supported Kosovo.

This entitlement was further supported with *historical arguments*. Moscow was arguing that when Georgia started the process of independence, in 1989-1990s, many state documents of the Georgian SSR, including those tying in a single state Abkhazia and Georgia, were canceled. Thus, when Georgia achieved independence, after a referendum Abkhazia had not taken part in, there appeared two states not related to each other: Georgia that exited the USSR and became an independent country; and Abkhazia, which remained part of the Soviet Union (Churkin 2008). The invocation of the regime of Gamsakhurdia fits also into this argument: "the government of Gamsakhurdia directly encouraged deporting South Ossetians to Russia, to cut the territory where Abkhazians live, to deprive Adzharia of autonomy, stated that only the title nation should rule over the territory of Georgia. This course was stopped in time, but Mikhail Saakashvili – [is now] the worthy continuer of Gamsakhurdia's ideas" (Lavrov 2008a).

The *criticism of the West,* in particular of the US, comes in continuation of the above arguments. Russia has reminded that in Kosovo NATO's military force was used, that in the first days of its intervention in Serbia NATO bombed the television tower in Belgrade "because it did not like the programs broadcast there" (Churkin 2008). The deputy foreign minister Karasin accused the West, in particular the US, of "trying to label [Russia] as the aggressor," however, "America has been cunning. For five years the US has armed the Georgians […] has sent wrong signals, so that Saakashvili could, and unfortunately still can feel safe. America will support him no matter what he has done" (Karasin 2008). In another train of thought, Karasin pointed that "NATO first expanded eastward, and now we are told that the next will be Georgia and Ukraine. If the NATO machine is slowly but surely approaching our bedroom, we are also starting to get nervous" (Karasin 2008). Even if this last argument was not very present in Moscow's 2008 legitimisation discourse, it shows that the security dilemma[1] played a determining role in the events of 2008.

Legitimizing an Annexation

When compared with the case of the war in Georgia, one can easily notice that the legal and humanitarian arguments have also been the most present in the Russian legitimization discourse after the annexation of Crimea. Since the beginning, President Putin had highlighted the *legality* of Moscow's actions in Ukraine: the incorporation of the peninsula came after a "fair and transparent" referendum held in Crimea, "in full compliance with democratic procedures and international norms," the Supreme Council of Crimea basing its decision on the provisions of the UN Charter that "speaks of the right of nations to self-determination" (Putin 2014a). Moreover, as in the case of Kosovo "the UN International Court of Justice ruled that, when it comes to sovereignty, the opinion of the central government can be ignored" (Putin 2016), thus, Crimea's secession would have complied with the international rules. President Putin reminded also that "when Ukraine seceded from the USSR it did exactly the same thing" (Putin 2014a) and that when Crimea was transferred from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR – it was done through a decision "made behind closed doors," "in clear violation of the constitutional norms that were in place even then" (Putin 2014a). From this perspective, the incorporation of the Ukrainian peninsula was presented as a reparation of an illegal historic action.

The annexation of Crimea was also justified by the fact that it occurred within the context of "an unconstitutional coup, an armed seizure of power" (Putin 2014b) executed in Kiev by "Nationalists, neo-Nazis, Russophobes and anti-Semites" that "continue to set the tone in Ukraine to this day." As there was "no legitimate executive authority in Ukraine", the government did "not have any control in the country" (Putin 2014a), inhabitants of Crimea chose "democratically" to join Russia. Within this context, the presence of Russian military forces in Crimea between February-March 2014 was justified by the fact that Russia had "to help create conditions so that the residents of Crimea for the first time in history were able to peacefully express their free will regarding their own future" (Putin 2014a).

Despite the evidence of violation of several international treaties, Moscow tried to also prove that the incorporation of Crimea was done without breaching Russia's international commitments. Foreign minister Lavrov, for instance, argued that even if Russia incorporated Crimea, Moscow had not violated the Budapest Memorandum because "it contains

only one obligation—i.e., not to use nuclear weapons against Ukraine. [And] no one has made any threats to use nuclear weapons against Ukraine" (Lavrov 2016). However, this statement shows a discretionary interpretation of an international agreement. As, besides references to the use of nuclear weapons, the Budapest Memorandum specifies that the signatory parts commit themselves to also respect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine; and would refrain from the threat or use of force against Ukraine (see Memorandum on Security Assurances in connection with Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons).

The *humanitarian argument* also played a central role in the Crimea legitimization narrative. Moscow accused the Ukrainian authorities of having tried to deprive the Russian minority of its "historical memory, even of [its] language and to subject [Russians] to forced assimilation" (Putin 2014a). Furthermore, "the so-called authorities" that organized the 'coup' in Kiev introduced a draft law to revise the language policy, "which was a direct infringement on the rights of ethnic minorities" (Putin 2014a). Besides the infringement of their rights, Russian ethnics would have had their lives in danger after the change in power in Kiev. "The Russian speaking population was threatened and the threats were absolutely specific and tangible" (Putin 2014b). As they opposed the "coup" they "were immediately threatened with repression […] the first in line here was Crimea, the Russian-speaking Crimea" and it was within this context that "the residents of Crimea and Sevastopol turned to Russia for help in defending their rights and lives" and "we had no right to abandon the residents of Crimea and Sevastopol to the mercy of nationalist and radical militants" (Putin 2014d).

According to foreign minister Lavrov, Russia's actions in Crimea "prevented bloodshed there. It prevented a rerun of the Maidan type of protests and war, which later erupted in the South-East" (Lavrov 2014b). Moscow insisted that it "was not simply about land […] what was at stake here were the millions of Russian people, millions of compatriots who needed our help and support" (Putin 2015a). Moreover, the Russian president expressed his concern for all Russians living in Ukraine, stating that "we are very concerned about any possible ethnic cleansings and Ukraine ending up as a neo-Nazi state" (Putin 2014f).

The *Kosovo precedent* was also very much invoked in Russia's Crimea legitimization narrative. The aim of this argument was not only to justify the secession of the Ukrainian peninsula, but also to draw attention

towards the West's double-standards approach. "Our Western colleagues created a very similar situation with their own hands when they agreed to the unilateral separation of Kosovo from Serbia, exactly what Crimea is doing now" and yet, while "Kosovo Albanians were permitted to do so [to become independent], Russians, Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars in Crimea are not allowed" (Putin 2014a). Referring to the human casualties that led to Kosovo's independence, President Putin rejected it as a legal argument for independence: "the ruling of the International Court says nothing about this. This is not even a double standard; this is amazing, primitive, blunt cynicism" arguing that "if the Crimean local self-defence units had not taken the situation under control, there could have been casualties as well" (Putin 2014a). Foreign minister Lavrov also rejected the argument of human casualties - "is it really necessary that a lot of blood be spilt in Crimea in order to obtain the consent of the Crimean people to have the right to self-defence? This is an anti-humanitarian statement of the problem" (Lavrov 2014a). Russian President Putin argued even that Crimea acted in a 'more' legal way than Kosovo, as Pristina "declared its independence by parliamentary decision alone. In Crimea, people did not just make a parliamentary decision, they held a referendum, and its results were simply stunning" (Putin 2014f). Minister Lavrov also pointed that Kosovo was not the only place where referendums were not held and that even "Germany's reunification was conducted without any referendum, and we actively supported this" (Lavrov 2015). In other words, while Russia supported the West even when their actions 'were not fully in compliance with international norms', the West has not supported Moscow, even if its actions in Crimea would have been 'more' legal.

The *historical factor*, more present in 2014 legitimisation discourse comparing to that of 2008, was in particular directed towards the domestic audience, appealing to the patriotism and the sentiment of brotherhood and unity of Slavic people: "everything in Crimea speaks of our shared history and pride," prince Vladimir would have been baptized there, Russian soldiers gave their lives to bring Crimea into the Russian empire and Sevastopol is the birthplace of Russia's Black Sea Fleet. Thus, every place in Crimea "is dear to our hearts, symbolizing the Russian military glory and outstanding valour" (Putin 2014a). The importance of Crimea for Russian spirituality and history was reiterated by other Russian officials too: "I believe that Crimea was a very special case, a unique case from all points of view. Historically, geopolitically, and patriotically" (Lavrov 2014b).

The *security argument* was invoked in the Crimea legitimization narrative especially in 2014. President Vladimir Putin explained that if Crimea had not seceded from Ukraine "NATO's navy would have been installed in Sevastopol", "in this city of Russia's military glory" (Putin 2014a), and that "from the naval point of view Sevastopol is more important than the base in Vladivostok or even more so than the base on the Kamchatka Peninsula" (Putin 2015c). What worried the Kremlin was that "if Ukraine joins, say, NATO, NATO's infrastructure will move directly towards the Russian border", and as Moscow "could not be sure that Ukraine would not become part of the North Atlantic military bloc […], it could not allow a historical part of the Russian territory with a predominantly ethnic Russian population to be incorporated into an international military alliance, especially because Crimeans wanted to be part of Russia" (Putin 2014c). These statements illustrate the central role the security dilemma played in Russia's decision to annex Crimea: "we could not allow our access to the Black Sea to be significantly limited; [or that] NATO forces cardinally change the balance of forces in the Black Sea area" (Putin 2014g). Like in 2008, Moscow did not insist publicly too much on this argument, however; even so, this helps us better understand the rationale behind the Kremlin's actions both in Georgia and Ukraine.

Like in the case of the 2008 Georgia war, in the Crimea narrative, the Kremlin stressed its *respect for the sovereignty* of its neighbours: "we have always respected the territorial integrity of the Ukrainian state," however, it highlighted the special relationship Russia has with this neighbouring country: "we are not simply close neighbours but […] we are one people. Kiev is the mother of Russian cities. Ancient Rus is our common source and we cannot live without each other" (Putin 2014a). Moreover, "I see no difference between Ukrainians and Russians, I believe we are one people" (Putin 2015b), "we in Russia always saw the Russians and Ukrainians as a single people" (Putin 2015a). Vladimir Putin stressed also that "Russia had never intended to annex any territories, or planned any military operations there, never" (Putin 2014b), the incorporation of Crimea would have come as a response to the will of the local inhabitants – "the final decision to return Crimea to the Russian Federation was only based on the results of the referendum" (Putin 2014b). Russian foreign minister, Sergey Lavrov also reiterated Moscow's respect for the principle of sovereignty in international affairs, however, "countries claiming that their sovereignty must be respected have to respect the rights of ethnicities residing in this country and prevent violations of the right to self-determination through

the use of sheer force" (Lavrov 2015), an explanation almost identical with that offered by Russian foreign minister in 2008, when Moscow accused Tbilisi of "destroying the territorial integrity of the state" by "directing the violence against its own citizens" (Lavrov 2008a). This shows once again that the two legitimization narratives have many common features, as the next section of the article will show.

Following a Known Path?

When analyzing Russia's 2008 and 2014 legitimization narratives, the first thing that strikes is that in both cases two similar arguments were most frequently used: the legality of Moscow's actions and the humanitarian factor. The legal factor was constructed around the UN principles in both cases - the right to self-determination and the responsibility to protect being the most invoked. The reliance on these principles is not random. In fact, they confer Russia a large margin of maneuverability. As these two principles are widely debated both by law specialists and experts in international relations, often sparking controversy about their legal application, this allows Moscow to exploit the grey areas in these unconsolidated international norms on self-determination and responsibility to protect. In fact, the West has been also criticized for abusing the principles of self-determination and responsibility to protect (e.g. the cases of Rwanda, Kosovo or Lybia), and the UN Charter and other international treaties have also been invoked for accusing Georgia of violating its provisions.

Another common feature was the 'vilification' of the authorities in Tbilisi and Kiev. The Georgian President was accused of being the main responsible party (the scape goat) for the human loss and for the compromising of the territorial integrity of his country – the territorial integrity being interpreted as linked with the obligation to respect the right to self-determination and development of all people living in the country. And similar accusations were formulated against the government in Kiev – the "Nationalists, neo-Nazis, Russophobes and anti-Semites" that "executed an unconstitutional coup" left the country ungoverned: the state lost monopoly on violence and the new "illegal" government, by threatening the Russians living in Crimea, determined the inhabitants of Ukrainian peninsula to secede.

The humanitarian factor was constructed both in the 2008 and the 2014 legitimization narratives by starting from some facts and developing further on assumptions. In the case of the Georgian war, Moscow first brought to the fore the war casualties, then centered the argument around the accusation against Tbilisi for having committed genocide and ethnic cleansing in South Ossetia and introduced the element of preparation or expectation of similar events in Abkhazia. The argument of genocide was built on false figures though. Both the authorities and Russian journalists were accusing Tbilisi of having caused thousands of deaths. Russian state-controlled media related that Georgia's attack on South Ossetia had resulted in more than 2.000 deaths, mostly Ossetians, the majority of them Russian citizens. This figure was subsequently reduced even by the Russian Federation's Investigation Committee of the General Prosecutor's Office to 162 civilian casualties (Fawn & Nalbandov 2012: 59). Then, Moscow's claims of ethnic cleansing committed by Georgia against Ossetians contrasted with undeniable evidence, including satellite images, of the destruction of Georgian villages and the forced displacement of thousands of ethnic Georgians by the South Ossetian militia, both in South Ossetia and, for a period, even deeper in Georgia (Alison 2009: 183). And finally, Moscow argued that Tbilisi was planning a similar attack on Abkhazians, without providing any evidence in this regard.

Russia constructed the humanitarian argument in the case of Crimea in a similar way. Starting from the facts that the rights of national minorities had not been totally respected by the Kiev authorities, that the new government tried to cancel the 2012 law "On the principles of the state language policy" and that far-right forces were involved in the Euromaidan protests as well; Moscow 'expressed its concerns' that not only in Russian speaking Crimea but in the entire Ukraine there could have occurred ethnic cleansing (Putin 2014f) even if there were no registered cases in this respect; and on the same basis, it alleged that the lives of Crimeans were in real danger because they did not support the 'coup' and the Ukrainian nationalists would have mobilized to coerce Russian ethnics there (see Putin 2015e).

Thus, in both 2008 and 2014 legitimization narratives, the role of facts in constructing the humanitarian argument was not central. Russia invoked "documents on planned aggression" against South Ossetia (Churkin 2008) and the "friendship train" (the 'nationalist' forces from Kiev were expected to come to Crimea by train) (Sputnik 2015) without evidence in this respect. These elements are in line with Pomerantsev's

(2016) observation that we are living in a post-fact world, where "facts no longer matter much," only interpretations, more important being how well disseminated/present in the public sphere is the version of facts one presents. In other words, how dominant the narrative is. Which in the end makes a certain political action acceptable. Thus, legitimization is not necessary connected to the facts or evidence but to the dominant discourse. In other words, "Putin doesn't need to have a more convincing story, he just has to make it clear that everybody lies, undermine the moral superiority of his enemies" (Pomerantsev 2016).

The humanitarian argument was not meant only for external legitimization but it addressed also the domestic audience. While in the case of South Ossetia Moscow insisted that most Ossetians were also Russian citizens, in the case of Crimea the focus was mainly put on the Russian ethnicity of the inhabitants of the Ukrainian peninsula. Thus, in the first situation Moscow invoked the constitutional duty to protect its citizens wherever they are, while in the latter situation – that the fellow citizens would have not forgiven Moscow authority for leaving their blood brothers in distress. The invocation of ethnic cleansing, genocide and chauvinistic policies of the governments in Tbilisi and Kiev, real or based only on assumptions, were meant to sensitize the domestic audience and to boost the support for Kremlin's actions among Russian citizens.

The Kosovo precedent was used as a legitimizing element in both the 2008 and 2014 narratives. This argument was invoked both for accusing the West of a double-standards approach towards international norms – recognizing Kosovo while refusing to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the will of Crimea's people; and for underlining that Pristina's decision was 'less' entitled than those of Sukhumi and Tskhinvali and less 'legal' than that of Crimea. The lack of entitlement of Kosovo's independence was argued by the fact that Belgrade respected the 1244 UN resolution, no one was attacking anymore, and, thus, the Albanian population did not have real reasons to secede; and by the fact that Kosovo is the historical heart of Serbia, while neither Abkhazia, South Ossetia or Crimea meant so much for Georgia's or Ukraine's history and spirituality. The questioning of the legality of Kosovo's independence was put on the fact that Pristina had not held a referendum for independence in comparison with Crimea, where the local population decided their own future "in full compliance with democratic procedures and international norms" (Putin 2014a).

Another common feature of the 2008 and 2014 legitimization narratives is the intertwinement of legal and historical arguments. The annexation of Crimea, besides being presented as in accordance with the democratic norms and international rules, was described also as the reparation of a historical injustice made by Soviet authorities in 1954. The independence of Abkhazia was motivated also by the fact that during the 1989-1990 process of independence in Georgia many state documents of the Georgian SSR, including those that tied in a single state Abkhazia and Georgia, were canceled. Yet, Moscow never mentioned the way these former Soviet republics became part of the USSR.

The security arguments even if not very present either in 2008 or in 2014 legitimization narratives were very clear expressed. The expansion of NATO towards Russia's borders was starting to "get Moscow nervous" in 2008 and determined the Kremlin to annex Crimea to not allow NATO forces to eventually come to "the land of Russian military glory" and change the balance of forces in the Black Sea. Even if the security dilemma appears to play a determining role in Russian foreign policy decisions, Moscow did not insist too much on this argument in its legitimization narratives, preferring instead to invoke the international law, the humanitarian factor and the Kosovo precedent. This strategy allows Moscow to divert the attention of the foreign audience from Russia's strategic interests that guided its actions both in 2008 and in 2014 and to easily frame its legitimization narratives into the West's similar rhetoric.

The comparison of Russia's Georgia war and Crimea legitimization arguments has, thus, revealed a big resemblance. Indeed, there were some specific elements in the construction of the 2008 and 2014 legitimization discourses that differed, such as the preferential interpretation of a specific international treaty (Budapest Memorandum, in 2014), or the invocation of domestic law (the constitutional right to defend Russians citizens wherever they are, in 2008). However, generally the structure of the legitimization discourses of 2008 and 2014 is very similar. This suggests continuity and planning in Russia's legitimization narratives: after 'testing' a strategy of justification in 2008, it appears that it was implemented in 2014 too, with further developments of some elements (i.e. self-determination not only for the purpose of legitimizing the recognition of independence of a breakaway region but also for the annexation of a territory).

Conclusions

Both in 2008 and in 2014, Moscow constructed its legitimization narratives on similar elements and in both cases prioritized same particular aspects: the international legality of its actions whether based on UN principles or by comparison with the West's previous actions (the Kosovo precedent); and the humanitarian factor. While at the beginning Moscow revealed the security dilemma and the preoccupation for its national interests, with the crystallization of the official legitimization narrative, the arguments of international legality and humanitarian intervention became the most developed and insisted on.

The insistence on the principles of self-determination and responsibility to protect is very appropriate for Russia's goals. They are not very well established in international law; and the invocation of the humanitarian factor leaves a great margin of maneuverability especially when few actors have access to the exact data from the operation theaters, the legitimizing actor being able to manipulate field data in order to justify certain actions (e.g. the exaggerated figures of war casualties in 2008). The grey areas of these yet unestablished principles were exploited by Russia both in 2008 and 2014. Moscow highlighted the case of Kosovo, where the Western community based its actions on the same principles, and accused the West of using double standards by condemning Russia's actions in South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Crimea.

While Russia insisted on the Kosovo precedent both in its 2008 and 2014 legitimization narratives, it also tried to 'devaluate' it by comparing it with Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Crimea. In the 2008 narrative, the emphasis was on the 'non-entitlement' of Kosovo Albanians to declare their independence: Belgrade respected the UN resolution that had ended the violence in Kosovo, thus, the local population was not under threat anymore; and Kosovo has a particular historical and spiritual importance for Serbian state. By comparison, the Kremlin argued that it had to intervene and later to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia because the lives of the civil population were in danger and these regions were historically separated from the Georgian state. In the Kosovo-Crimea comparison, Moscow emphasized the legal character of the process of independence: while in Crimea there was a referendum, thus, the local population expressed its will, in Kosovo the independence had been decided only by a parliamentary decision – thus even if recognized

by a large number of Western states, the independence of Pristina was presented as 'less legal.'

The construction of Russia's legitimization narrative around the humanitarian intervention was not totally fact-based either in 2008, or in 2014. The figures of human casualties were exaggerated by Russian sources during the Georgia war in order to justify the accusations of genocide against Georgian authority, and in the case of Abkhazia, Moscow justified its military intervention on Tbilisi's alleged plans to attack the breakaway region. The Russian humanitarian narrative in the case of Crimea was also based on assumptions. While President Putin emphasized that in the Ukrainian peninsula there was not a single shot fired and there were no human casualties (see Putin 2014a), he insisted also on the fact that the 'nationalists' from Kiev would have planned to attack the civil population in Crimea, and that is why Russia had to resort to humanitarian intervention there.

The invocation of the West: its actions – as a precedent, or the norms it supports; has been very present in Russia's legitimization narratives. Moscow has insisted on the need of "fair manner" of interpretation of the UN resolutions, Helsinki Final Act, the Paris Charter and other international treaties' principles (in reference to the right to self-determination) (Lavrov 2015) and has invoked in particular the actions of the US. In his 18 March Address, where the main arguments behind the decision of the annexation of Crimea were explained, President Putin quoted both a UN International Court decision and statements of the US submitted to the UN International Court regarding the Kosovo case (Putin 2014a) and insisted on the fact that Russia was acting in the same manner as the US did. In other words, Moscow's strategy is not necessary to prove that it acted right, but that its actions are in line with those of the West. This appears to have been the guiding line both in 2008 and 2014 Russia's legitimization narrative, where the mimicking of the West's arguments (e.g. the responsibility to protect, the right to self-determination) was central.

The resemblance of the arguments used by Moscow to justify the war in Georgia and the annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula also suggest the existence of a strategy of legitimization. After 'testing' a series of justifying arguments for the violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia in 2008, Russia appears to have followed the same legitimizing narrative for the violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine in 2014.

NOTES

[1] "Security dilemma occurs when one state perceives as a threat to its own security or prosperity its neighbours' integration into military alliances or economic groupings that are close to it" and, its source – exclusivity, "transforms integration [from] a positive-sum process by definition, into a zero-sum game that is excluded from the integration initiatives offered to its neighbours" (Charap and Troitskiy 2013: 50).

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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 600 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 ties, 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 organized and coordinated by NEC in the academic year 2018-2019:

- ***NEC Fellowships (since 1994)***
  Each year, the 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.

- ***Ştefan Odobleja Fellowships (since October 2008)***
  The Fellowships given in this program are supported by the National Council of Scientific Research and are part of 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.

- ***UEFISCDI Award Program (since October 2016)***
  The outstanding scientific activity of the NEC was formally recognized in Romania in 2016, when the *Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation* organized a competition for institutions coordinating ERC projects. New Europe College applied and won two institutional prizes for coordinating, at that time, two ERC grants. A part of this prize was used to create the

UEFISCDI Award Program, consisting of fellowships targeting young international researchers, also meant to complement and enlarge the core fellowship program.

- ***The Pontica Magna Fellowship Program (since October 2015)***
  This Fellowship Program, supported by the VolkswagenStiftung (Germany), invites young researchers, media professionals, writers and artists from the countries around the Black Sea, but also beyond this area (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine), 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 this region. This program is in many ways a continuation of its predecessor, the *Black Sea Link* Fellowships.

- ***The Pontica Magna Returning Fellows Program (since March 2016)***
  In the framework of its *Pontica Magna* Program, New Europe College offers alumni of *Black Sea Link* and *Pontica Magna* Fellowship Programs the opportunity to apply for a research stay of one or two months in Bucharest. The stay should enable successful applicants to refresh their research experience at NEC, to reconnect with former contacts, and to establish new connections with current Fellows.

- ***The Gerda Henkel Fellowship Program (since March 2017)***
  This Fellowship Program, developed with the support of Gerda Henkel Stiftung (Germany), invites young researchers and academics working in the fields of humanities and social sciences (in particular archaeology, art history, historical Islamic studies, history, history of law, history of science, prehistory and early history) from Afghanistan, Belarus, China (only Tibet and Xinjiang Autonomous Regions), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Mongolia, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan, 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 Spiru Haret Fellowship Program (since October 2017)***
  The *Spiru Haret* Fellowship Program targets young Romanian researchers/academics in the humanities and social sciences whose projects address questions relating to migration, displacement, diaspora. Candidates are expected to focus on Romanian cases seen in a larger historical, geographical and political context, in thus broadening our understanding of contemporary developments. Such aspects as transnational mobility, the development of communication technologies and of digitization, public policies on migration, the formation of transnational communities, migrant routes, the migrants' remittances and entrepreneurial capital could be taken into account. NEC also welcomes projects which look at cultural phenomena (in literature, visual arts, music etc.) related to migration and diaspora. The Program is financed through a grant from UEFISCDI (The Romanian Executive Unit for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding).

- ***Lapedatu Fellowships (since June 2018)***
  Thanks to a generous financial contribution from the *Lapedatu* Foundation, NEC invites to Bucharest a foreign researcher specialized in the field of Romanian Studies, who is currently conducting research in one of the world's top universities. He/She is expected to spend a month in Romania and work with a young Romanian researcher to organize an academic event hosted by the NEC. At this colloquium, the *Lapedatu* fellows and their guests will be invited to present scientific papers and initiate debates on a theme that covers important topics of the Romanian and Southeastern European modern and contemporary history. The contribution of the *Lapedatu* family members to the development of Romania will be taken into consideration.

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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.

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Financial Support

The State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation of Switzerland through the Center for Governance and Culture in Europe, University of St. Gallen

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

Landis & Gyr Stiftung, Zug, Switzerland

VolkswagenStiftung, Hanover, Germany

Gerda Henkel Stiftung, Düsseldorf, Germany

Porticus Stiftung, Düsseldorf, Germany

Robert Bosch Stiftung, Stuttgart, Germany

Marga und Kurt Möllgaard-Stiftung, Essen, Germany

European Research Council (ERC)

Lapedatu Foundation, Romania

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