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THE HIGHLY IMPORTANT, NON-EXISTENT NATIONAL INTEREST

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Abstract

The thesis intends to provide a new concept of national interest which emphasizes a pluralist view of politics and offers a constructivist theoretical framework to understanding national interest. This concept argues that on the one hand national interest is one of the most important phenomena in international politics, but on the other hand it does not exist. It is one of the most important phenomena in international politics because national interest has an essential significance in the making of foreign policy, namely most of the countries define their foreign policy goals through their national interests. On the other hand, national interest does not exist in the sense as it is perceived traditionally because it never represents the interests of a nation. It represents the interests of different interest groups of the international society, which define their interests along their identities.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

The concept of national interest has been played a highly important role in the theories of international politics. One reason for this is that Hans J. Morgenthau put the concept of national interest at the forefront of classical realism and claimed that ‘the concept of interest defined in terms of power’ is the ‘main signpost’ regarding the inquiry of international relations.¹ This approach has been contested by many scholars, and some of them have questioned the usefulness of the whole concept of national interest as well.² However, Morgenthau’s approach has become a point of reference for International Relations, thus every theory of international politics has developed its own understanding of the notion ‘national interest’.³

The interpretations of national interest are highly diversified among major IR theories. As Scott Burchill points out “sometimes it is the very foundation of a theoretical approach (traditional realism) while in other cases it is a means to rationalize and mask decision taken for a variety of other reasons (Marxism)”.⁴ Neo-realists argue that the ultimate national interest of a state is its survival and security. Liberals perceive national interest as the competition of particular interests of a nation’s civil society to pull the state to a certain direction. Constructivists emphasize the importance of the identity in the creation of the national interest to better understand the processes behind the surface of politics.

However, the problem with major IR approaches is that they point out particular aspects of national interest, but they can not appropriately explain current political processes and phenomena like disruption of states, national interest of multinational states, national

¹ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 7th ed. (McGraw Hill Education, 2005), 5.

² Jutta Weldes, *Constructing National Interests: The United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Minneapolis-London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 3.

³ Scott Burchill, *The National Interest in International Relations Theory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 1-9.

⁴ Ibid. 4.

interest of failed states, the role of multinational companies, international organization, subnational entities in the creation of the national interest. They can not explain these phenomena because most of the concepts regarding national interest are either state centric and/or do not reveal the deeper causes behind the activity of different actors. Thus, I develop a concept of national interest which emphasizes a pluralist view of politics and offers a constructivist theoretical framework to understanding the aforementioned phenomena. Furthermore, I show that different constructivist scholars emphasize different aspects of national interest, but they have not created a widely shared constructivist concept of the issue. I argue that my concept is appropriate to put together the results of different constructivist scholars to provide a general theoretical framework regarding national interest.

In order to develop a more comprehensive concept of national interest, I build a bridge between the liberal and constructivist understanding of the issue. To do that, I use two major findings of Charles A. Beard to underpin my argument. Beard published a book about the history of the national interest of the United States in 1934. First, he stated that economic interest groups influenced the state of the United States to represent their interests as national interest. Second, he draws attention that interests are inseparable from ideas because interests are subjective and can work only in social relationships.⁵ So, Beard's work proves that it is possible and necessary to study actors different from the state and reveal the deeper causes behind their acts concerning national interest in the same time.

Beard's first finding is in accordance with the liberal concept of national interest, which is concerned with the understanding of particular interests in the civil society.⁶ The latter corresponds with the constructivist approach because constructivists claim that interests of the actors can not be anything and does not exist per se, but "identities are the basis of

⁵ Burchill 2005, 10-12.

⁶ Andrew Moravcsik, "Liberal International Relations Theory: A Scientific Assessment" in *The Progress in International Relations Theory: Appraising the Field*, ed. Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 165.

interests”. Thus, actors define their interests in the social context of the situation.⁷ Hence, I provide an approach which perceives variety of actors in defining national interest like liberals do, but I will use a constructivist theoretical framework to inquire the reasons of the activity of these actors.

I put the importance of the notion of national interest as well, and would like to highlight its practical importance. This is necessary because it seems that mainstream IR theories have neglected its research for a decade, and have forgotten its significance regarding international politics. They have done it despite the fact that majority of states use national interest as the major narrative regarding their foreign policy activity.

Accordingly, I argue that on the one hand national interest is one of the most important phenomena in international politics, but on the other hand it does not exist. It is one of the most important phenomena in international politics because national interest has an essential significance in the making of foreign policy, namely most of the countries define their foreign policy goals through their national interests. On the other hand, national interest does not exist in the sense as it is perceived traditionally because it never represents the interests of a nation. It represents the interests of different interest groups of the international society, which define their interests along their identities.

In the following parts of my thesis, I provide an elaboration of this concept. First, I introduce the approaches of different International Relations theories regarding the concept of national interest. Second, I introduce the theoretical framework of my concept about national interest. Afterwards, I demonstrate the usefulness of this concept with the help of a case study. Lastly, I conclude the results of my paper in the final chapter of the thesis.

⁷ Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is what states make of it,” *International Organization* 46, No. 2 (Spring 1992): 398.

Chapter 2 - The National Interest in International Relations Theory

2.1 Charles Beard's Approach – A Historian Perspective

Every theory of international politics has developed its own interpretation of the notion 'national interest'. However, one of the first memorable inquiries of the concept was not conducted by an IR scholar, but a historian. In his book, *The Idea of National Interest: An Analytical Study in American Foreign Policy* (published in 1934), Charles A. Beard investigated the national interest of the United States until the New Deal. One of his other books from the era, *The Open Door at Home* (published in 1935), includes seminal statements about the national interest as well, and pointed out two major points.

First, he highlighted that the national interest of the United States had been influenced by the economic interests of different groups of the society, and these groups achieved that their particular interests were presented as the national interest of the country. Beard supported his argument with large empirical data and many case studies regarding the regional diplomacy of the United States.⁸ So, he clearly pointed out that national interest is never national, but always particular.

Beard studied the struggle of interest groups in different contexts at different points in time.⁹ He identified two "historical strains" regarding the American understanding of national interest. One of them assigned significance to the domestic market and the American development at home. According to Beard, this interest group was based mostly on agricultural production, and followed the so-called Jeffersonian traditions of foreign policy. Namely, they claimed the United States had to prosper at home, and did not have to care for the rest of the world. The other interest group, the Hamiltonians, promoted manufactures and

⁸ Burchill 2005, 2.

⁹ Charles A. Beard, *An economic interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (1935; reprint, New York: Free Press, 1986), 19-51. (page citations are to the reprint edition).

trade abroad. The Hamiltonians argued the United States had to care for international matters if these affairs endangered the country's prosperity or safety.¹⁰

These inquiries led Beard to elaborate his second main finding. Beard perceived the interests inseparable from ideas, and noticed that "interest also involves human perception and interpretations".¹¹ Thus, interests are subjective and have meaning only in certain social contexts. He clearly states that "interest, subjectively considered, may take the form of an idea, and every idea pertaining to earthly affairs is attached to some interest considered as material thing and is affiliated with social relationships. Neither can be separated from the other in operations called 'understanding, 'appraisal' or 'measurement'."¹² According to him, this is one of the reasons why national interest can never be an objective phenomenon.¹³

Beard also argues that interests and ideas are locked into each other, and "a realistic view of the world must include both". Thus, "the only operation that seems appropriate when 'interest' is mentioned is to inquire: what ideas are associated with it? And when an 'idea' is mentioned, to inquire: what interests are associated with it?"¹⁴

These thoughts and his two major findings were clearly ahead of Beard's time. Liberal and constructivist International Relations scholars would raise similar ways of thinking only in the 1990's. Hence, nowadays Beard has been 'discovered' again by scholars who are engaged in research of the national interest like Scott Burchill or H. W. Brands.

However, Beard's approach was strictly historical and did not try to build up a theoretical background to his account. As a historian, Beard was fully convinced that the national interest "can only be truly revealed in retrospect".¹⁵ Furthermore, he could not know the work of IR scholars because he died in the same year when Morgenthau published his

¹⁰ H.W. Brands, "The Idea of the National Interest," *Diplomatic History* Vol. 23, No. 2. (Spring 1999): 244.

¹¹ Burchill 2005, 10.

¹² Charles A. Beard, *The Open Door at Home* (New York: 1935, 157-158. quoted by Burchill 11-12.

¹³ Burchill 2005, 11-12.

¹⁴ Charles A. Beard, *The Open Door at Home* (New York: 1935, 157-158. quoted by Burchill 11-12.

¹⁵ Charles A. Beard, *The Idea of National Interest* (Chicago: 1934), 26. quoted by Burchill 13.

seminal book, “Politics Among Nations”. Thus, he did not have the opportunity to be involved in the first big debate regarding the concept of national interest in the 1950’s. Probably, these two affairs impeded him to theorize his findings.

2.2 Realists

Hans J. Morgenthau’s aim was exactly the theorizing of the sphere of international politics. He put the concept of national interest at the forefront of classical realism. Thus, the big debate about the concept of national interest began in the early 1950’s.

Morgenthau summarized the main principles of political realism into six points in his influential book, *Politics Among Nations* (first published in 1948), to provide a new, sophisticated orientation towards the understanding of world politics. In this work, Morgenthau suggested that the national interest is a tool of analysis for researchers and a guide for action for decision makers at the same time.

Morgenthau assumed that ‘objective laws’ shape the processes of international politics and they have not changed since the antiquity. Thus, realist scholars have to study the world along these ‘objective laws’. According to him, the objective laws stem from ‘human nature’, and the most important law is “that statesmen think and act in terms of interest defined as power”. This observation helps realists to understand international politics and build their theoretical explanations about it.¹⁶

Morgenthau claims that “interest defined as power” has shaped the political actions during the history of mankind, hence it is an “objective category” and “universally valid”. He perceives the idea of interest as “the essence of politics”, and maintained that history has proven its self-evident significance. However, the current strong relationship between interest and nation-state will not necessarily last forever because it is a historical phenomenon. Thus,

¹⁶ Morgenthau 2005, 4-5.

it may change in the future, if nation-states lose their significance and are substituted by something else.¹⁷

Morgenthau draws the attention to the fact that it is impossible to separate interest from the “political and cultural context” where the foreign policy decision making process works.¹⁸ Although Morgenthau accepts the importance of the cultural context, he assumes that every nation knows what their interests are. Thus, according to him, every country pursues its own interests and accumulates power to achieve them. Namely, he perceives the national interest as a non-problematic phenomenon, and does not ask the question where these interests come from. However, as many critics point out, this understanding of national interest does not reveal too much about the conduct of states in international politics.¹⁹

Kenneth Waltz, one of the founders of neorealism, has criticized classical realists, like Morgenthau as well. However, his criticism is based on totally different assumptions. He argues that classical realists focus on human nature, interest, power and judgment of statesmen, instead of inquiring the system of international politics per se. Waltz states that neorealism has succeeded where classical realism could not and has separated the internal and international realms of politics. Thus, it became possible to create a real theory of international relations.²⁰ Waltz reasons that “neorealism develops the concept of a system’s structure which at once bounds the domain that students of international politics deal with and enables them to see how the structure of the system, and variations in it, affect the interacting units and the outcomes they produce.”²¹

According to Waltz, the international system is basically anarchic and decentralized because international politics works in an environment where government or any other agent

¹⁷ Morgenthau 2005, 11.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Burchill 2005, 41.

²⁰ Kenneth Waltz, “Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory,” *Journal of International Affairs* Vol. 44, Issue 1 (1990): 28-31.

²¹ Ibid. 28.

with 'system-wide authority' does not exist. In such a system self-help principle prevails, thus the units of the system - the states - are struggling to ensure their own survival. Waltz argues that survival is a precondition regarding the realization of any other objects of states, hence every unit provides efforts to defend themselves.²²

Accordingly, the neorealist understanding of national interest emphasizes the survival of the state. Waltz argues that "to say that a country acts according to its national interest means that, having examined its security requirements, it tries to meet them." He explains that states usually choose policies based on their situation, and act carefully not to endanger their own existence.²³ Neorealists perceive national interest as a product of the structure of the international system. For that very reason, national interest of states is given and is not really problematic for neorealists per se. For them, it becomes interesting when they analyze how the national interest of a country is achievable.²⁴

However, this very persuasive but at the same time very narrow understanding of national interest, i.e. the survival of the state, can not treat many present phenomena of international relations. For instance, it can not explain the disintegration of different states, the role of multinational companies and international organizations in international politics, just to mention some. Thus, the neorealist concept of national interest has not developed toward a sophisticated enough approach.

In sum, realists mostly perceive the national interest as given, and they believe that states are the most important actors in international politics. They do not ask questions like where interests come from or how they are created. They are fully satisfied with this superficial approach regarding national interest and do not inquire the deeper motives of the actors.

²² Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979), 88-105.

²³ Ibid. 134.

²⁴ Ibid.

2.3 Liberals

The liberal concept of national interest is much more sophisticated than the realist understanding of the issue. Liberals claim that international politics and interactions between states are not understandable as long as we do not know what kind of social forces and domestic groups shape the behavior of countries. According to liberals, the actors of international politics are not the states but ‘rational individuals and private groups’, who attempt to represent their interest. Thus, they perceive politics as a bottom-up process.²⁵

Liberals do not believe that the national interest is given like realists, but as a phenomenon which is influenced by different domestic social groups. Eventually, their “weighted preferences” shape foreign policy, but it is realized by “rational state officials”. In this process the state is not an actor but a ‘representative institution’ providing a ‘transmission belt’ for the members of the civil society to translate their power through politics into state policy. Of course, in this process individuals and groups do not have the same power and opportunities, thus “every government represents some individuals and groups more fully than others”.²⁶ This perception is very similar to Beard’s first finding regarding the national interest; however, liberals see the interest groups more broadly and not only in economic terms as Beard did.

Liberals have acknowledged that their inquiry has focused on the nation state because they believe this institution has provided the most significant tool to channel different interests of individuals and private groups appropriately. However, liberals accept that it may happen in the future that sub-national or supra-national institutions will take over the role of the nation state, which is partly true, for instance, regarding the European Union.²⁷

The constructivist criticism of the liberal approach of national interest reveals the flaws that liberals do not answer the question either how the interests come into being in the

²⁵ Moravcsik, 2003, 163-164.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

actors. Constructivists claim that liberals pushed the unit of analysis below the level of the state, but their approach is basically not really distinct from the realist concept. Namely, they think in structure and system, thus, the liberal approach is not able to study social forces which influence the interests of actors.²⁸

2.4 Constructivists

Constructivists have introduced a fully different approach regarding the inquiry of international politics. They argue that a single objective reality does not exist but “international politics is a world of our making.” It is the reason why they highlight the significance of the “social dimension of international relations” and show the constitutive role of language, rules and norms. Constructivists argue that these rules and norms are not given but are the product of the chains of interactions which have been evolved through the history.²⁹

Alexander Wendt, one of the most influential constructivist IR scholars, has laid down the constructivist understanding of national interest. For Wendt, the unit of analysis regarding interests - similarly to realists - is the state. He states that “identities are the basis of interests.” Wendt argues that actors do not possess interests per se independently from their social context, but “they define their interests in the process of defining situation.”³⁰ Namely, how actors act in different situations is essentially based on their identities. He argues that states have multiple identities at the same time, and these identities build a hierarchical structure, which define the importance of particular identities regarding the actor’s ‘self-concept’.³¹

Wendt points out that identities indicate “what actors are”, while interests indicates “what actors want”. Wendt attracts the attention that actors first must have identities to know

²⁸ Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), 146-147.

²⁹ Karin M. Fierke, “Constructivism” in *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, ed. Tim Dunne, Mila Kurki, and Steve Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 167-172.

³⁰ Wendt 1992. 398.

³¹ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 224-231.

what they want and know what their interests are. In addition, identities depend on the cultural and social context, thus interests can be fully different for two actors. Although Wendt emphasizes the importance of identity, he acknowledges that identities do not determine actions per se. He argues that “without interests identities have no motivational force, without identities interests have no direction”. Hence, identity and interest play a “complementary explanatory role”, and we should inquire into both, instead of perceiving them as rivals regarding the scientific research.³² This statement resonates with Beard’s second finding, which also emphasizes that interests do not exist per se, and can work only in social relationships.

Wendt argues that there are four major objective national interests which must be achieved by states to reproduce their identity and succeed in international politics. These are physical survival, autonomy, economic well-being and collective self-esteem. These interests are “constructions of the international system” and constrain the opportunities of states concerning their foreign policy goals.³³

Other constructivists do not agree with Wendt’s approach regarding the national interest. They argue that there is no reason why constructivist inquiry should focus only on states. Hence, they do research on substate actors and transnational entities as well.

One example is Martha Finnemore who points out in her book *National Interest in International Society* (1996), that national goals do not stem necessary from inside the state, but norms of international society can shape national interests as well. She argues that states are operating in “dense networks of transnational and international social relations” which influence their worldview. Eventually, they are socialized by the international society, thus “international system can change what states want”.³⁴

³² Wendt, 1999, 231.

³³ Ibid. 234.

³⁴ Finnemore 1996, 2-5.

Finnemore also highlights that states do not always know what they want, and in such a situation they often seek for orientation what is appropriate to do. In many cases, they are ready to learn and imitate or follow the procedures of other actors regarded as appropriate or useful.³⁵ She argues that norms help in this learning process, but they provide some constraints as well. However, we should not forget that these norms are accepted by actors who perceive them appropriate. Accordingly, Finnemore defines “norms in a simple and sociologically standard way as shared expectations about appropriate behavior held by a community or actors.” She acknowledges that actors often violate norms, but the recognition of the violation per se proves the existence of norms as points of reference.³⁶

Finnemore provides three case studies in her book, which are the case of the UNESCO and the creation of state science bureaucracies, the International Red Cross and the Geneva Conventions, and The World Bank and poverty. In the three cases, she demonstrates that actors create structures which begin to act independently and these structures react to the actors. However, she shows that this process works vica versa as well. Social structures can empower actors “who may act to overturn structures for reasons of their own”.³⁷ Accordingly, her conclusion is that social rules can be as powerful as material constraints regarding the behavior of states. Furthermore, the norms she studied work more than in a regulative way and their effect can be much deeper than material constraints. Namely, these norms are “constitutive” because they constitute and influence different actors and interests.³⁸

Another constructivist scholar whose research does not focus on states is Jutta Weldes. She inquires into who creates the national interest of a state in a specific situation. In her book *Constructing National Interest: The United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis* (published in 1999), she argues that the main actors in creating national interests are state officials, who are

³⁵ Ibid. 11.

³⁶ Ibid. 22-23.

³⁷ Ibid. 30-31.

³⁸ Ibid. 128-129.

lead by the so called security imaginary of the state. The concept of security imaginary plays a crucial role in Weldes' argument. She states that "the security imaginary of a state provides what might be called the cultural raw materials out of which representations of states, of relations among states, and of the international system are constructed. National interests, in turn, emerge out of these representations."³⁹ Weldes points out that after the United States recognized the Soviet deployment of middle range ballistic missiles (MRBM) in Cuba, there was not any significant debate between US state officials regarding the main foreign policy goal because they all agreed that the missiles had to go. Debate was only about the policies how this national interest was achievable. Weldes shows as well that US officials did not understand the motives of Soviet and Cuban leaders, and did not accept their representations regarding the crisis. She argues these two elements stem from the American security imaginary of that time.⁴⁰

According to Weldes, the US security imaginary during the missile crisis was defined by the American identity of the postwar era and had four main characteristics. These were the role of world leader, the champion of freedom, the strength nation and the US' permanent credibility problem. These identity features defined the American representation and perception of the crisis, and these elements defined the construction of the foreign policy problem as well. However, this foreign policy problem which was created by state officials, allowed them to strengthen and rearticulate the US state identity as the global leader of free nations.⁴¹

This case study introduces convincingly the importance of state officials in creating national interest. However, the Cuban missile crisis was a unique situation where only a small group of men had the opportunity to decide and did not have time for a broader debate.

³⁹ Weldes 1999, 10.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid. 197-223.

Weldes acknowledges that usually the “intellectual apparatuses” participate in framing of foreign policy and creating the security imaginary. The intellectual apparatuses are think tanks, private organizations designed to study and lobby for foreign policies, private research centers, universities etc.⁴² However, this concept excludes national interests outside the sphere of security and does not take into consideration economic, social or cultural goals of the nation. Furthermore, it does not include Finnemore’s results regarding the influence of international society either.

Constructivists offer a new approach to understanding national interest as a concept which is based on the identity of actors. However, different constructivist scholars have studied different aspects of national interest and they have not provided a shared constructivist concept of national interest. For instance, they do not agree on the unit of analysis. Wendt argues that the state is the most important actor in international politics, but Finnemore emphasizes the constitutive role of international society and Weldes points out the crucial role of state officials in creating national interest. Furthermore, constructivist scholars do not always use each others’ conclusions regarding the issue. These phenomena impede constructivism to exploit its potential to create a new general theory of national interest.

The golden age of the concept ‘national interest’ was in the beginning of the Cold War, when classical realists introduced it as the major analytical tool of international politics. In the 1950’s a great and vigorous debate evolved around the issue. For instance Professor McGeorge Bundy from the Harvard University gave a course which was “devoted entirely to denouncing Morgenthau”.⁴³ However, the impact of classical realism regarding national

⁴² Ibid. 109.

⁴³ Michael G. Roskin, “National Interest: From Abstraction to Strategy” in *US Army War College Guide to Strategy* ed. Joseph R. Cerami and James F. Holcomb, Jr (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute United Army War College, 2001), 57.

interest is unquestionable because its approach is often the base of the way of thinking of decision makers, especially in the military.

The biggest challenge of conventional understanding of national interest was posed by constructivists in the 1990's. They point out the complexity of the issue and offer a new ontological and epistemological framework which provides an opportunity to reveal the background of the processes of national interest. However, they have not conducted any major research regarding the issue since the end of the 1990's, and their concept of national interest has not been developed into a general theory.

Chapter 3 - The Concept of “National Interest”

In my research, I argue that on the one hand national interest is one of the most important phenomena in international politics, but on the other hand it does not exist. It is one of the most important phenomena in international politics because national interest has an essential significance in the making of foreign policy.⁴⁴ On the other hand, national interest does not exist in the sense as it is perceived traditionally because it never represents the interests of a nation.

In the first part of this chapter, I shortly introduce why national interest is particularly salient regarding international politics. I use a small survey to demonstrate the significance of national interest in the foreign policy of different countries, and show its importance in practice. This is necessary because it seems that mainstream IR theories have neglected its research since the end of the 1990's, and have not struggled to achieve a general conceptualization of the issue. In the second part of the chapter, I introduce why national interest does not exist, and develop my concept regarding national interest and make an attempt to build a bridge between the liberal and constructivist understanding of the issue.

3.1 “National interest is one of the most important phenomena in international politics”

3.1.1 The Background of National Interests

Traditionally national interest is perceived as “what’s good for the nation as a whole in international affairs.”⁴⁵ This approach distinguishes between the domestic and international spheres of politics, and defines public interest as “what’s good for the nation as a whole in

⁴⁴ Weldes 1999, 1-19.

⁴⁵ Roskin 2001, 55.

domestic affairs.”⁴⁶ However, this understanding of national interest is clearly too simplistic and does not take into consideration the complexity of the issue.

According to Scott Burchill, the origins of national interest are the principle of *raison d'état* (the reason of state) and Rousseau's concept of general will.⁴⁷ The basic elements of *raison d'état* was described first by Nicolo Machiavelli in *The Prince* in the beginning of the sixteenth century.⁴⁸ He argued that the preservation of the state must be one of the most important goals for rulers, and furthermore rulers do not have to take into consideration ethical or sentimental principles to achieve the basic goals of their state.⁴⁹ However, Cardinal Richelieu was the person who developed this concept to perfection. He created the Ministry of External Affairs in France to harmonize the work of envoys and other diplomatic personnel. Richelieu believed that the foreign policy of the state had to ignore the dynastic and religious concerns "or the a ruler's wishes". He argued that the government has to perceive the real 'state interests' and pursue its policies along these interests regardless ethical deliberations.⁵⁰

Contrarily, Rousseau introduced the concept of general will, which assumed that a community can have "common interest that the society should be governed".⁵¹ Namely, a community "can speak with a common voice".⁵² Rousseau was aware of particular interests of a society as well, thus he developed the concept of 'civic religion' which would have been created social cohesion between the members of the state.⁵³ Rousseau's approach provided a concept to the emerging nationalism and offered the philosophical background of that time evolving nation states.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 55.

⁴⁷ Burchill 2005, 10-22.

⁴⁸ Niccoló Machiavelli, *The Prince* (The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1976; reprint, Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2008), 93-387.

⁴⁹ Burchill 2005, 17.

⁵⁰ Encyclopedia Britannica: Diplomacy, <http://www.britannica.com/>

⁵¹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and The First and Second Discourses* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 170.

⁵² Burchill 2005, 13.

⁵³ Ibid. 16.

This is an important aspect because nation states are perceived the most important actors in international relations nowadays. However, what nation state has meant and how national interest has been perceived, it has changed profoundly since their initial formulation. For instance, the term national interest was already used as a base of political actions in Italy in the sixteenth century and in England in the seventeenth century.⁵⁴ However, that time it was understood as the interest of the ruler or the ruling noble class. Thus, they were not nation states as we understand today.⁵⁵

Only during the industrial revolution, when the power of the middle class emerged significantly and its interest were already incorporated into the political system of the state in the nineteenth century, was the national interest perceived much more broadly. However, this broad concept was painfully narrow according to modern standards. In 1832, only 813 000 people had the right to vote on the parliamentary elections in Great Britain, which was the most democratic country in Europe.⁵⁶ It meant that many groups of the society were still excluded from the body of the nation: women, ethnic minorities, slaves, working class, poor people etc.

Furthermore, the evolution of nations have not happened in the same time in the West either. Thus, the spread of the notion of national interest happened at a different time in different places. In the United States, the usage of the notion ‘national interest’ “became commonplace from the time the US constitution was drafted”.⁵⁷ However, in Europe referring to the national interest has been widely used since the beginning of the twentieth century.⁵⁸ The reason is that only the twentieth century brought universal suffrage in the Western countries, thus national interest has been attached not only to some groups of a society but to the whole population. The Second World War also showed clearly the importance of the

⁵⁴ Burchill 2005, 21-26.

⁵⁵ Matthew Horseman and Andrew Marshall, *After the Nation State* (London: HarperCollins, 1994), 3-5.

⁵⁶ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 203.

⁵⁷ Burchill 2005, 21-26.

⁵⁸ Horseman and Marshall 1994, 20.

public and masses in foreign policy, and it was the reason why some scholars put the national interest to the major analytical tool of international politics.⁵⁹

3.1.2 The Role of National Interest in International Politics Today

As the nation state became the ‘natural’ basis of the analysis in international politics the acts on behalf of the national interest have become accepted in the international politics and have been used by more and more actors. The main reason of this phenomenon is explained by Jutta Weldes. She argues that the national interest is important to international politics because of two reasons:

First, it is through this concept of national interest that policy makers understand the goals to be pursued by a state’s foreign policy. It thus in practice forms the basis for state action. Second, it functions as a rhetorical device that generates the legitimacy of and political support for state action is generated. The ‘national interest’ thus has considerable power in that it helps to constitute as important and to legitimise the actions taken by states.⁶⁰

Weldes’ claim can be true only regarding the states which use the concept of national interest in their foreign policy discourse. However, we do not really know how many countries use it. In order to find out how prevalent the usage of the concept of national interest is among states, I made a small, non-representative survey. Twenty countries’ strategic documents, speeches of their political leaders and the WebPages of their ministries of foreign affairs and ministries of defense were analyzed. The main goal of the survey was to identify the concept of national interest in the foreign policy discourse of these states. The significance

⁵⁹ Burchill 2005, 28-29.

⁶⁰ Jutta Weldes, ‘Constructing National Interest’ *European Journal of International Affairs* 2/3 (1996): 276.

of the concept in their discourses has not been investigated, the research has focused only on its presence. Namely, I conducted content analysis.

The sample I used provides approximately ten percent of the number of states on the Earth, however the population of these states contains thirty-seven percent of the world population. The investigated countries were the following: Austria, Brazil, China, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Latvia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Romania, Russia, Saudi-Arabia, Slovakia, United Kingdom, United States and Vietnam.

According to my inquiry, ninety-five percent of the sample - nineteen countries from twenty - use the concept of national interest in their official discourse regarding foreign policy. The only exception is the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where officials and official documents do not refer to national interest. Instead, the Constitution of Saudi Arabia use expressions like ‘public interest’, ‘interest of the people’ and ‘interest of the state’.⁶¹ It is possible that this language refers to the fact that Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy and the legitimation of the ruling class does not stem from the citizens at all.

However, one can find a large amount of references on the national interest in different strategic and foreign policy related documents, speeches, policy recommendations and analysis of the great powers. For instance, the latest National Security Strategy of the United States of America states that “championing freedom advances our interests because the survival of liberty at home increasingly depends on the success of liberty abroad.”⁶² The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation clearly declares that “Russia pursues an open, predictable and pragmatic foreign policy determined by its national interests”.⁶³ Furthermore, one of the main responsibilities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the

⁶¹ Saudi Arabia - Constitution http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/sa00000_.html

⁶² The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, March 2006, 3.

⁶³ The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, July 2008
<http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/text/docs/2008/07/204750.shtml>

People's Republic China is to "safeguard national sovereignty, security and interests on behalf of the state."⁶⁴

From these quotations, one could assume that only the most powerful countries shape their foreign policies along their national interest. However, the countries which refer to their national interest in different documents are so diverse regarding their geographical location, economic development and historical background that we can assume that the concept of national interest is universally used in international politics. For instance, according to the Hungarian National Security Strategy "Hungarian national interests can and need to be asserted in the framework of the Euro-Atlantic integration".⁶⁵ One of Kenya's foreign policy points of orientation is the 'national self-interest'⁶⁶ and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan would like to achieve its foreign policy goals by consolidation its role "based upon moderation in the regional and international arenas and confirm the distinction of diplomatic work with the aim of protecting Jordan's higher national interests."⁶⁷

During the research, it became clear that different countries refer to the concept of national interest. Almost all of them use the term to define their goals. This empirical finding clearly points out the importance of the concept of national interest. Accordingly, I argue that national interest is one of the most important phenomena in international politics.

3.2 "The national interest does not exist"

In this section, I will argue that national interest does not exist in the sense as it is perceived traditionally. Traditionally, national interest is understood as the interest of a nation-state regarding foreign policy, or otherwise "what's good for the nation as a whole in

⁶⁴ Main Responsibilities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, April 2009
<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zyzz/t558670.htm>

⁶⁵ The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Hungary, 2004, 1.

⁶⁶ Kenya's Foreign Policy Orientation
http://www.mfa.go.ke/mfacms/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=13&Itemid=31

⁶⁷ Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Jordan, <http://www.mfa.gov.jo/>

international affairs.”⁶⁸ The problem with the most concepts of national interest is that they are highly state-centric. Regular people and scholars of International Relations as well usually take granted that national interest belongs to the state. However, national interest never represents the interest of “the nation as a whole”, but the interests of different subnational, national, international interest groups and individuals who influence the construction of national interest deliberately or unwittingly.

Thus, first, I will highlight that state centric approaches can not define appropriately the national interest of different actors and can not treat the most important contemporary processes in international politics. Second, I will argue that national interest represents more the interests of different ‘interest groups’ which are struggling and competing to influence the policy and decision making processes of the state, thus they influence the concept of national interest of a state. These actors are from different level of the international society, and are working in certain social context where their nature of interactions defines the impact which they lay on the national interest of a state. Hence, I believe that in order better to understand the interests of these interest groups, studying their identity is highly important.

3.2.1 Problems of State Centric Approaches Regarding National Interest

The concept of national interest is usually bound with state centric approaches, which perceive the states as unified actors. However, this view can not deal with the most important events and processes of current international politics, thus it can not study appropriately the national interest of actors in many cases. One of the flaws is that widely acknowledged state centric concepts concerning national interest are contested by contemporary events. Second, state centric approaches can not treat the situations where the existence of states is blurred or

⁶⁸ Roskin 2001, 55.

they are too weak. Third, the international economic community and international organizations play a significant role in shaping national interest.

First, I argue that current phenomena have showed that widely shared state centric concepts regarding national interests are not so obvious at all. The major shared state centric concept concerning national interest is the physical survival of states. According to many scholars it is the most important national interest which is accepted by different realist, liberal and constructivist scholars. Neorealist Waltz argues that security and survival are the only crucial interest of the nation state.⁶⁹ Neoliberals like Alexander George and Robert Keohane highlight that survival is a very important national interest, but autonomy and economic well-being are at least as important as security. The constructivist Wendt accepts George's and Keohane's concept and complements it with the term of "collective self-esteem".⁷⁰ Thus, the physical survival is widely used and accepted as the primary national interest in International Relations. However, I argue that there are situations when powerful interest groups of a state are not interested in the existence of their state any more, but attempt to split their state many parts or decide to join to another state. Hence, in such situation it is not possible to claim that the survival of the state is a national interest.

The survival of the state as the major national interest was questioned by the collapse of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, the split of Czechoslovakia and the disappearing of East-Germany from the map. Wendt argues that it is true that

... states still sometimes decide that it is in the national interest to allow peripheral territories to secede as did the Soviet and Czechoslovak states. ... Russia was the core of the Soviet State while Bohemia was of the Czechoslovak, and both in effect survived by ceding their peripheries – a fact

⁶⁹ Waltz 1979, 134.

⁷⁰ Wendt 1999, 235.

acknowledged by the international community when it recognized Russia and the Czech Republic as “successor” states.⁷¹

Contrarily, in my view the aforementioned four countries did not survive, but most of them (Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia) have collapsed to many parts because subnational interest groups were not interested in the existence of their states. One of them (East-Germany) joined another state and abandoned deliberately its sovereignty and autonomy.

In the case of the Soviet Union, the emergence of political consciousness of different substate regions and their elites regarding the struggle for secession are clearly traceable.⁷² These interest groups were not interested in the survival of their formal state (USSR) anymore, but they wanted to create new statehoods. They had the will and the possibility to act effectively, and the interest group which wanted to defend the Soviet state could not or did not want to intervene. Thus, the interest groups which were not interested in the existence of the USSR won and the Soviet Union collapsed into fifteen sovereign states.

In the case of Yugoslavia the situation was similar. Many interest groups which were associated with nationalities did not want preserve the Yugoslav state, but wanted to build their own state. However, the interest group, who tried to preserve Yugoslavia, built up an extreme nationalist ideology to mobilize an ethnic group to defend the multinational Yugoslavia. It led to the bloody secession wars of the Balkans.⁷³ Today six or seven countries (it depends on the recognition of Kosovo) exist instead of Yugoslavia.

⁷¹ Wendt 1999, 235.

⁷² Marc Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 159-198.

⁷³ Neil A. Abrams, “Nationalist Mobilization and Imperial Collapse: Serbian and Russian Nationalism Compared 1987-1991-2”, *Ab Imperio*, 2002/2

To the beginning of the 1990's the two main ethnic groups of Czechoslovakia did not want to live in the same country anymore. Thus, the two main interest groups of Czechoslovakia divided the state to Czech Republic and Slovakia peacefully.

East-Germany's example is different from the previous cases because it did not split, but its leaders and population ended deliberately the life of their country, when East-Germany joined to West-Germany. Namely during the reunifying process the German Democratic Republic was totally 'absorbed' of its free will by the Federal Republic of Germany.

So, it is untenable to say that the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, East-Germany and Yugoslavia would have survived and would exist today as well. Some of the interest groups of these countries were not interested in the existence of their states. They imagined their life in another statehood and succeeded in achieving their goals.

Therefore, the survival of the state is not necessarily a national interest because sometimes it is not the interest of very significant interest groups of a country. Sometimes the situation is quite the opposite and the most powerful actors of a state want to end the existence of their state. Thus, the statement of state centric approaches that the survival of the state is the most important national interest is seriously questionable.

Second, state centric approaches regarding national interest face similarly serious problems in situations where states are blurred or simply do not exist. For instance, Waltz, Keohane or Wendt would be in a very tricky situation, if they had to treat the national interest regarding the Kosovo issue. Before the declaration of independence of Kosovo, 'three states' existed on the territory of the former Yugoslav province, despite the lack of one strong administration. Kosovo was a United Nations-administrated territory with appropriate administrative institutions, but Kosovo had its own parliament and government; furthermore, according to the international law, the province belonged to Serbia. In this regard, after the declaration of independence the situation has not changed significantly. Despite the fact that

one third of the countries of the world have recognized Kosovo as an independent country, the ‘three states’ exists today as well.

If we want to treat the national interest concerning this situation according to a state centric approach, first we have to make a normative statement and have to decide whether we accept the independence of Kosovo. It means that our statement would reveal we studied the national interest of Serbia which contains Kosovo, or we inquired into the national interests of Serbia and the independent Kosovo, or we wanted to do research with regards to the interests of the UN administration in Kosovo. Thus, state centric approaches are highly problematic in terms to defining national interests where the statuses of states are not obvious.

The situation is more complicated regarding the unrecognized states of Eurasia like Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, Dnestr Moldovan Republic, Republic of Abkhazia and Republic of South Ossetia. These entities are de facto independent states, although they are not recognized by the majority of the countries. Interestingly, these unrecognized states are not always struggling for international recognition because many strata of their societies are benefit from this ambiguous situation. For instance, they are receiving international aid. Furthermore, the aforementioned unrecognized states are heaven for smuggling and organized crime. Surprisingly, these phenomena are often economically beneficial for the officials of the states to which they belong according to the international law.⁷⁴

Another problem is the countries where the state is weak or failed and the administration can not provide the basic conditions and responsibilities of a sovereign government. If the state lost “the physical control of its territory or a monopoly on the legitimate use of force” or the “legitimate authority to make collective decisions” erodes,⁷⁵ other interest groups emerge and fill the vacuum. Such interest groups can be grass-root self-

⁷⁴ Charles King, “The Benefits of Ethnic War: Understanding Eurasia’s Unrecognized States,” *World Politics*, Vol. 53 (July 2001): 524-552.

⁷⁵ Failed States Index Faq, <http://www.fundforpeace.org/>

help movements, warlords, tribes, groups of organized crimes etc. In such cases, the central government is not able to represent effectively the interests of its whole territory, which - according to international law - belongs to it. This is the situation now for instance in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Chad, Iraq, Congo etc.⁷⁶

In situations when the states are blurred or the states are weak, the main problem of state centric approaches arises from the core of the concept: its being state centric. To understand the national interest in such cases we have to take into account other levels of the international society, and not only the traditionally perceived states. It is necessary because state centric approaches restrict the spectrum of the unit of analysis, hence they can not treat appropriately many significant current phenomena in international politics.

Third, state centric concepts of national interest usually do not take into consideration the effects of International/Intergovernmental Organizations and the international economic community. An often referred to argument in this respect stems from Waltz, who argues that “so long as the major states are the major actors, the structure of international politics is defined in terms of them.” Furthermore, he states that the “death rate among states is remarkably low”.⁷⁷ Wendt uses a similar approach when he declares that “no matter how much transnational actors grow in importance, no matter how much autonomy is undermined by international regimes or economic interdependence, states keep trying – and apart from a few “failed states” mostly successfully – to reproduce themselves.”⁷⁸

I agree that states are the most important actors in international politics because states possesses the institutions and authority to govern large amount of people in a territory. Furthermore, states are the subject of international law. However, I would like to point out that the international economic community and international organizations exert a great

⁷⁶ Failed States Index Ranking <http://www.fundforpeace.org/>

⁷⁷ Waltz, 1979, 94-95.

⁷⁸ Wendt, 1999, 238.

impact on the national interests of states. For instance, multinational companies have more and more influence because their economic importance is often greater than that of many states. Despite the economic crisis, last year the ExxonMobil's revenue was 477 billion dollars,⁷⁹ which is the same amount of the whole GDP of another oil giant, Saudi Arabia.⁸⁰ In another comparison the ExxonMobil's revenue is almost the same as the GDP of Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria altogether.⁸¹ Of course, it is much less than the GDP of the biggest countries, but in my view the multinational companies have enough resources to influence the policies of states, which phenomena will be introduced in my case study.

The influence of the international economic community regarding state policies has already been shown by many scholars and analysts. For instance, Thomas Friedmann pointed out that if a country wants its economy to grow, it will take the "Golden Straitjacket" of free market. Although, the golden straitjacket causes economic growth, the importance of politics shrink in the state because the state had to follow some golden rules, which are beneficial for the electronic herd (stock and bond currency traders, multinational companies). If a government deviates significantly from these rules, the electronic herd leaves it and move to another country, where the economic environment is beneficial for it. According to Friedman, these phenomena constrain decisively the freedom of governments regarding their decisions and policy choices.⁸² Probably this situation will change as a result of the economic crisis, but Friedman's explanation shows the importance of the economic community in influencing government policies.

Furthermore, as I mentioned previously, Martha Finnemore provides a convincing argument about the importance of the international society in shaping the national interests of states. She focuses on international organizations like the Red Cross, World Bank and

⁷⁹ ExxonMobil News Release, January 30, 2009, 9.

⁸⁰ CIA World Factbook: Saudi Arabia <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

⁸¹ CIA World Factbook: Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

⁸² Thomas Friedmann, *Lexus and Olive Tree* (Farrar, Strauss and Young, 1999), 86-92.

UNESCO. Finnemore depicts the processes how these institutions can change the norms in international politics in different fields, which causes important alterations in the perception of states regarding their national interests.⁸³

The aforementioned contemporary political and economic situations show that we have to take into consideration the impact of the international economic community and international organizations as well. Their influence has been growing steadily, and although due the economic crisis, the role of the economic herd will shrink to some degree, it seems that the importance of multinational companies will not change significantly in the future.

In sum, the state centric approaches regarding national interest are not sufficient to make sense of the current main economic, political and social phenomena. State centric approaches can not answer the most important questions outside of the state level realm, and the international politics embed many different actors and not only states. Thus, in order to understand more properly the processes regarding the national interest, I develop an approach which recognizes actors outside the state level.

3.2.2 A New Concept to Understanding National Interest

I argue that national interest does not represent the nation, but the interests of different 'interest groups' from different levels of the international society. In my research, I adopt Martha Finnemore's statement regarding international society and will use it as a reference point:

The international society ... is not a society of states of the kind posited by the English school or by Wendt. It is a society that looks much more like the world of complex interdependence or turbulence described by liberals in the

⁸³ Finnemore 1996, 34-128.

variety of actors it recognizes and in the blurring of old-fashioned “levels of analysis” created by the transnational linkages it investigates.⁸⁴

Thus, interest groups can be subnational, national, international interest groups, and individuals who possess enough resources to influence the behavior of the administration of a certain state. Albeit, the primary aim of the interest groups is not to affect the national interest, but to represent their socially constituted interests effectively. Thus, their influence on national interest can be intended or unintended as well. Furthermore, I presume that the study of the identity of the interest groups is highly important because it can bring closer to the better understanding of the constitution of national interest.

I call subnational interest group every interest group who has the will and ability to influence the making of foreign policy of a state and is located in the state which it wants to influence. Such kind of interest groups can be political parties, minority groups, regional political groups, immigrant groups, clans, tribes, economic interest groups (e.g. military industrial complex, lobby groups), groups of organized crime, academia, research institutes.

National interest groups are typically the administrations of states, which represents the ‘national interest’ in the international arena and toward the citizens of its state as Jutta Weldes pointed out. According to my understanding, they are influenced and are under pressure by subnational, international interest groups and other individuals who are trying to influence the policies and strategies of the administration. However, administrations have their own interests and imaginations as well and attempt to pursue them.

International interest groups are very similar to subnational interest groups regarding their function in shaping national interests. Namely, the international interest groups are groups who have the will and ability to influence the making of foreign policy of a state but

⁸⁴ Finnemore 1996, 145.

are not from the state which they want to influence. In this manner, international interest groups can be administrations of other states, multinational companies, the staffs of international organizations, groups of international organized crime, groups of international terrorism.

The fourth group is the persons who have the will and the opportunity to influence deliberately the administrations of certain states, but they are not members of any government. The history has produced many persons who have made great impact on the international system and different states. For instance, Henry Dunant who founded the International Red Cross and organized international forums, where states agreed on the rules of conduct wars.⁸⁵ Another example can be George Soros, who - with the help of his foundations - accelerated the political processes in Central and Eastern European states in the 1980's which led to the fall of communism.⁸⁶

This approach seems to be very similar to the liberal concept of national interest regarding the unit of analysis because it emphasizes a pluralist view of politics. It corresponds to Beard's first major finding too because he emphasized that national interest of the United States had been influenced by the economic interests of different groups of the society, and they managed to get these particular interests to be presented as the national interest of the country. Like Beard, liberals usually highlight the role of different domestic interest groups in shaping national interest as well. Another similarity with liberal approaches regarding my concept is that some liberal research has studied the impacts of international interest groups like the effects of multinational companies to the politics of the state. However, I do not perceive the state just as a "transmission belt" or a representative institution, as liberals and Beard do. I do not agree with this liberal assumption, but I accept Jutta Weldes' results that

⁸⁵ Finnemore 1996, 34-68.

⁸⁶ George Soros, *The Age of Fallibility: Consequences of the War on Terror*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2006), 53-61.

show that state officials play a crucial role in constituting national interest and pursuing foreign policy.⁸⁷ Thus, I argue that the administration and institutions of the state have their own interest and act accordingly. I accept that these interests are often influenced by other actors and the social background of the processes, but this phenomenon is true regarding every interest group and it is not a unique characteristic of the state.

The major difference between my concept and liberal approaches is not the unit of analysis, but it is a more ontological and epistemological question. I take a constructivist stance during my research, and accept that identity is the base of interests because as long as we do not know who we are, we do not know what we want.

According to constructivism actors do not possess interests per se independently from their social context, namely they do not have a “portfolio” of interests from nowhere.⁸⁸ Rather, every interest, material interest as well, are the products of identity, and “actions continually produce and reproduce conceptions of Self and Other, and as such identities and interests are always in process”.⁸⁹ This corresponds with the second finding of Beard, hence he attracts the attention that interests are inseparable from ideas because interests are subjective and can work only in social relationships.

However, different constructivist scholars emphasize different aspects of national interest, although they have not provided a shared constructivist concept of the issue. I argue that my concept is able to put together the results of different constructivist scholars to provide a general theoretical framework regarding national interest.

In the next chapter, I will illustrate the analytical usefulness of my concept through a case study. The case study will investigate how national interests are shaped by different interest groups in Austria and Hungary regarding the Nabucco gas pipeline project. I chose

⁸⁷ Weldes 1999.

⁸⁸ Wendt 1992, 398.

⁸⁹ Wendt 1999, 36.

this topic because many subnational, national and international interest groups play important roles in this issue, which provides a good opportunity to show that national interest does not exist because it never represents the interests of a nation. It represents more the interests of different interest groups of the international society, which define their interests along their identities.

Chapter 4 - National Interest of Austria and Hungary regarding the Nabucco Pipeline

This chapter aims to demonstrate the analytical usefulness of the concept depicted earlier, in addition it will illustrate that national interest does not exist in the sense as it is perceived traditionally. I will introduce the political and economic processes regarding the interest groups which influence the Austrian and Hungarian national interest in the Nabucco gas pipeline project. I choose Austria and Hungary for case studies because these two countries provide the best examples concerning Nabucco to explain the impact of interest groups on national interest. First I describe shortly the most important empirical and conceptual issues regarding Nabucco. Second, I introduce the concept of Europeanisation which helps to understand different processes and phenomena regarding Nabucco. Third, I depict the acts of the interest groups involved in the gas pipeline issue regarding Austria and Hungary.

4.1 The Nabucco Gas Pipeline

The Nabucco pipeline is a very sensitive project because it would be the first pipeline transporting gas from the territory of the former Soviet Union to Europe which bypasses Russia. According to the basic concept, Nabucco would transport natural gas from the Caspian Sea Region to Europe. The already existing Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE) pipeline provides a nexus between the Caspian and Turkey; however ‘there is a missing link between Erzurum and the European pipeline grids. Nabucco would fill this missing link’⁹⁰ via Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Austria.

The proponents of the Nabucco project – Western, mostly US officials and scholars - argue that this new pipeline would help Europe to avoid a greater dependence on Russian

⁹⁰ Nicklas Norling, *Gazprom's Monopoly and Nabucco's Potentials: Strategic Decisions for Europe* (Washington DC: The Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2007), 2.

energy resources. The opponents – mostly Russian politicians – are reasoning that Nabucco is not feasible, it is too costly and nobody knows exactly where the gas would come from to fill the pipeline. They rather advise Europe to support the Russian South Stream gas pipeline project, which would transport natural gas on a very similar route as Nabucco would (Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, Austria). Both sides have been lobbying very strongly in the countries concerned and many agreements have already been signed regarding the two pipeline projects.

These political processes regarding Nabucco are usually interpreted with state-centric, mostly realist approaches and perceived as a part of a bigger geopolitical game in the wider Black Sea Region among Russia and the United States – European Union.⁹¹ According to most explanations, the European Union plays a very important role in this game, but it is often criticized because of its lack of ‘cohesive approach’, ‘disunity and hesitancy’ which impede the EU from representing its energy related interests effectively against Russia.⁹²

However, the usual realist and geopolitical approaches are not sufficient enough to explain the national interests of Austria and Hungary regarding the Nabucco pipeline project. These approaches concentrate exclusively on the acts of the aforementioned centers of power involved in the issue, and consider the smaller states participating directly in the project (Austria, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey) as places where these powers are struggling for influence, and do not reveal what the national interest can be of these smaller countries.

I concentrate on Austria and Hungary because the interest groups of these two countries are the most active actors regarding Nabucco and they are competing and

⁹¹ Zeyno Baran and Robert A. Smith, “The Energy Dimension in American Policy towards the Black Sea Region”, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, No.2. (2007):265-274.; Garreth Winrow, “Geopolitics and Energy Security in the Wider Black Sea Region,” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, No.2. (2007):217-235.; Rafael Kandiyoti, “What price access to the open seas? The geopolitics of oil and gas transmission from the Trans-Caspian republics”, *Central Asia Survey*, No.1. (2008):75-93.

⁹² Zeyno Baran, “EU Energy Security: Time to End Russian Leverage,” *The Washington Quarterly*, no.4 (2007): 140.

cooperating very intensively with each other. The European Union as an international interest group plays a significant role in both cases. To understand the EU's importance, I use the concept of Europeanisation to show how small countries can shape EU-policies and how their policies can be shaped by the EU as well. Thus, in the next part I shortly introduce the concept of Europeanisation.

4.2 The Concept of Europeanisation

Europeanisation is a highly controversial concept because it has been evolving and 'no shared definition has emerged' yet.⁹³ At the beginning of this decade, Johan P. Olsen pointed out that at least five possible uses of *Europeanisation* had existed at that time, namely: changes in external boundaries of Europe, developing institutions at the European level, central penetration of national systems of governance, exporting forms of political organization and a political unification project.⁹⁴ However, 'Europeanisation scholarship has become the study of the impact on and of the EU, analyzed through a number of policy specific case studies',⁹⁵ which limited its scope. Thus, contemporary Europeanisation studies clearly distinguish between the phenomena of EU-ization and Europeanisation.

The concept of Europeanisation emerged especially for explaining the phenomena regarding the first pillar of EU. Thus, Europeanisation is quite a new approach in foreign policy studies, especially because a common European foreign policy does not really exist. According to Reuben Wong,

Instead of a coherent and authoritative decision-making center, we observe persistent national foreign policies that operate under or alongside – and sometimes at variance with – “EU” foreign policies defined by the Commission, the European

⁹³ Johan P. Olsen, “The many faces of Europeanisation”, *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40(5) (2002): 922.

⁹⁴ Ibid. 923-924.

⁹⁵ Trine Flockhart, *The Europeanization of Europe: The Transfer of Norms to Europe, in Europe and from Europe*, (Copenhagen: DIIS Working Paper 2008/7), 5.

Parliament and/or the Council. As the EU is not a single unified actor, “EU foreign policy” (EFP) is usually understood and analyzed as the sum and interaction of the “three strands” of Europe’s “external relations system”, comprising: (a) the national foreign policies of the member states; (b) EC external trade relations and development policy, and (c) the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU.⁹⁶

Because of the complexity of the issue, many debates have evolved, but there is a ‘general understanding’ that three different Europeanisation processes exist in the relationship between the European Union and its member states’ foreign policy: uploading, downloading and cross-loading.⁹⁷ (see Figure 1)

Uploading is a ‘bottom-up’ process, and it means the projections of national ideas regarding foreign policy to the EU level. In such a case, the state attempts to ‘Europeanize’ its national preferences. The process of downloading is the exact opposite. It is a ‘top-down’ process, which is ‘understood as the penetration of the European dimension into the national’.⁹⁸ In this case, the foreign policy of a state is ‘Europeanized’ from the EU level, and the country plays only a ‘passive recipient’ role.⁹⁹ Cross-loading is the ‘socialization of interests and identities’ in other words ‘identity reconstructions’ and is the result of the previous two (uploading, downloading) processes.¹⁰⁰ The many ‘uploadings’ and ‘downloadings’ bring closer the point of views, ideas and identities of EU member states.

According to this concept, foreign policy Europeanisation is a socialization process and not a coercive or compelling ‘formal adaptation’.¹⁰¹ For instance, Michael E. Smith

⁹⁶ Reuben Wong, “Foreign Policy,” in *Europeanisation. New Research Agendas* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 322.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 325.

⁹⁸ Claudia Major, “Europeanisation and Foreign and Security Policy – Undermining or Rescuing the Nation State?,” *Politics*, no. 3. (2005): 176-181.

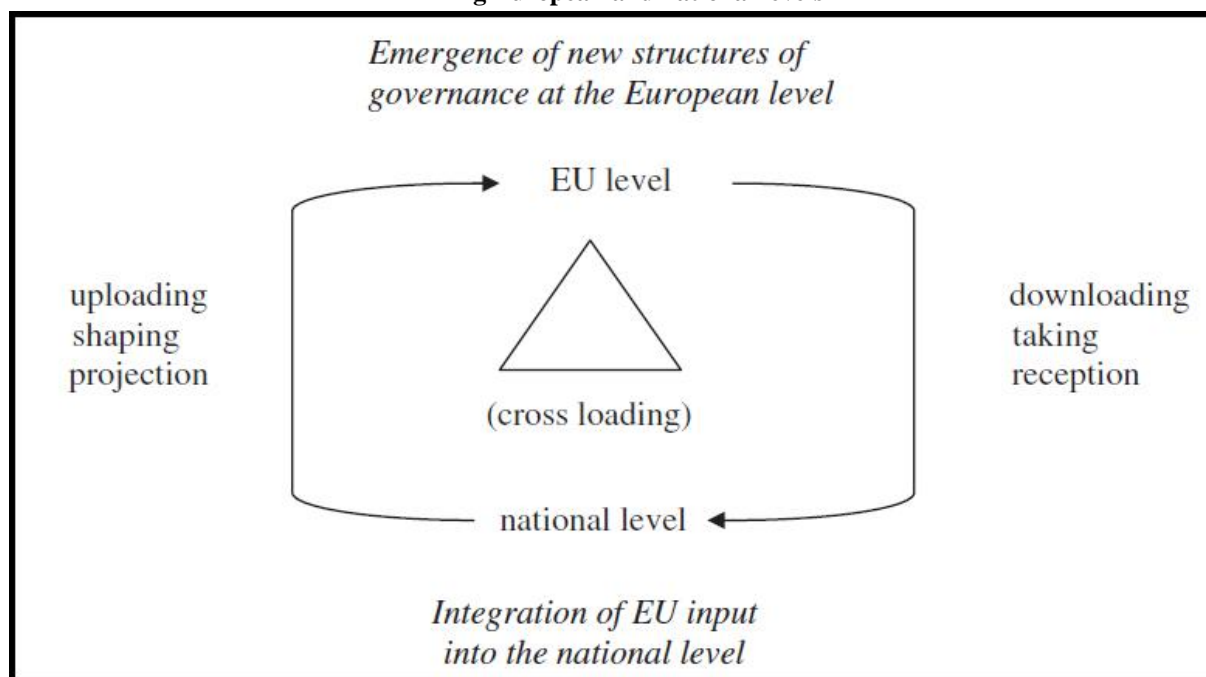
⁹⁹ Ibid. 181.

¹⁰⁰ Wong 2007, 324.

¹⁰¹ Wong 2007, 333.

highlights that of course there are differences among member states concerning foreign policy issues, but usually they tend to coordinate their actions. Furthermore, when an EU member state takes action alone without consulting other member states, they promptly begin to criticize the extravagant behavior. Thus, an obvious ‘social rule’ is noticeable within the EU.¹⁰²

Figure 1 Europeanisation as an ongoing and mutually constitutive process of change linking European and national levels



Source: Major (2005) 182.

Many scholars argue that during the study of Europeanisation we have to take into account the internal and external factors, the endogenous and exogenous actors and processes as well.¹⁰³ This is very important observation because Europeanisation does not work in vacuum. (see Figure 2)

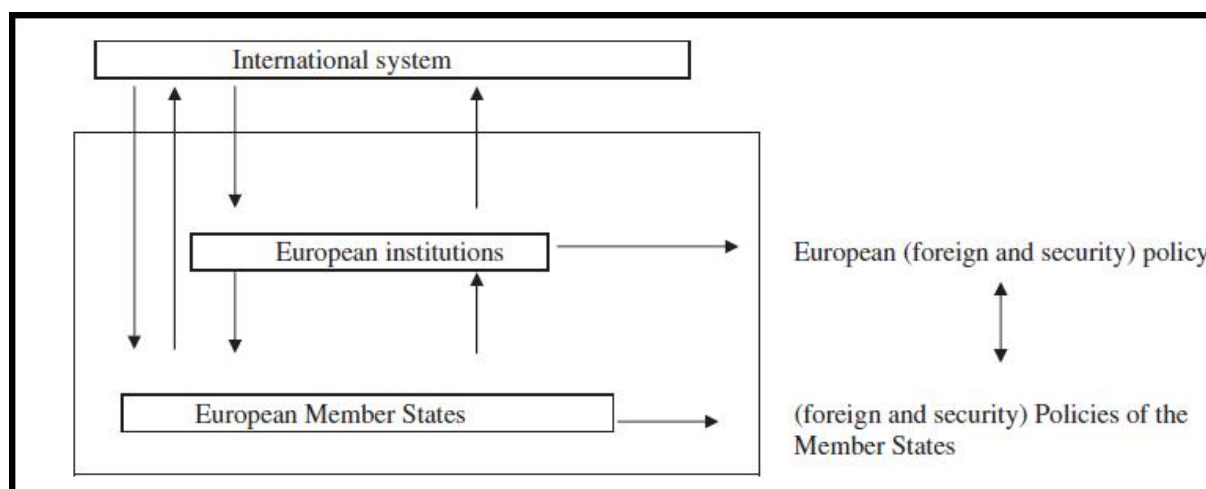
I use the uploading, downloading concepts of Europeanization differently than the original concept. I apply it not only regarding the description of the relationship between EU

¹⁰² Michael E. Smith, “Institutionalization, Policy Adaptation and European Foreign Policy Cooperation,” *European Journal of International Relations*, no. 1.(2004): 123.

¹⁰³ Michael E. Smith, “Researching European Foreign Policy: Some Fundamentals,” *Politics*, no.3. (2008): 182.

and member states but I use it more widely to depict the relationship between interest groups which are on different levels in the international society as well.

Figure 2 Europeanisation: general concept of influences and interaction among international, European and national levels



Source: Major (2005) 184.

4.3 Austria and Hungary in the Nabucco Project

In this chapter I present the chain of events of the processes regarding Austria's and Hungary's national interest about Nabucco. First, I show the attempt of Austria's interest groups to upload the Nabucco project to the European Union level. Second, I describe how Hungary was influenced by different international and subnational interest groups regarding the construction of its national interest in the pipeline issue. My main sources for the research are Hungarian and Austrian newspapers and the international media. Furthermore, I focus on different speeches and analyses regarding the issue as well.

The period which is inquired concerning Austria is 2002-2006. During this time Austrian subnational and national interest groups achieved that Nabucco became a European project. The only subnational interest group regarding Austria which is involved in the study is OMV. OMV is the largest industrial company of Austria and one of the largest multinational oil and gas corporations in Central Europe. The national interest group is the

Austrian government, and the international interest group which shapes the national interest of Austria regarding Nabucco is the European Union.

In the case of Hungary, I study the events between 2007 and 2009 because this period provided fundamental changes in the Hungarian national interest regarding Nabucco. The subnational interest groups are the MOL - the Hungarian oil and gas company - and the Hungarian opposition. The national interest group is the Hungarian government. The international interest groups are the European Union, the foreign policy elite of the United States and the Gazprom together with the Kremlin.

4.3.1 Austria uploads the Nabucco to the European Union

The first negotiations on the Nabucco Pipeline Project between OMV - Austria's largest oil-producing, refining and gas station operating company - and Turkish BOTAS - state-owned crude oil and natural gas pipelines and trading company - began in February 2002. Following the first successful talks, the two companies invited in the project the oil and gas companies of other concerned countries: MOL of Hungary, Bulgargaz of Bulgaria and Transgaz of Romania. In June 2002 in Istanbul, the representatives of the five companies signed a protocol on their joint intention to build the Nabucco gas pipeline which – according to the first plans - would connect ‘the significant Middle-Eastern, Egyptian and Caspian gas reserves with Austria, and even further with the Central- and Western-European gas markets through a new pipeline crossing Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary’.¹⁰⁴ Four months later the aforementioned companies signed a Cooperation Agreement on a feasibility study regarding the construction of the Nabucco project.¹⁰⁵

OMV, the only company which was from the territory of the European Union among the concerned companies that time, began to lobby for Nabucco at the EU level and

¹⁰⁴ Nabucco Gas Pipeline Project: Project Phases & Milestones
<http://www.nabucco-pipeline.com/project/project-phases-milestones/index.html>

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

informally became the leader of the project. Actually, OMV attempted to ‘Europeanize’ this project and began to upload it to the EU level. It was possible because OMV possessed the identity of the biggest, most influential and most developed oil company from Central Europe. Furthermore, it had the identity of a European company which ‘necessarily’ had to have the capacity and the know-how to ‘lead’ the Nabucco project among Central and South European companies.

The first step of the uploading process was really successful. In the end of 2003, OMV had achieved that the European Commission awarded the feasibility studies of the project (market analysis, technical, economic and financial studies) by a bigger sum, which covered approximately 50% of the costs. Furthermore, the companies of the four non-EU member states could benefit from this fund as ‘associated beneficiaries’.¹⁰⁶

The first feasibility studies showed a very positive picture about the possibilities of the Nabucco pipeline, thus the gas and oil companies of the ‘Nabucco Partner’ countries signed a Joint Venture Agreement in June 2005.¹⁰⁷ It seemed that this event strongly substantiated the viability of the pipeline. In the same year, OMV successfully uploaded the Nabucco to the Austrian government. Thus the Nabucco which was partly the plan of OMV, became clearly the national interest of Austria. It was possible very easily because the Nabucco project was in accordance with the identity of all the Austrian governments regarding foreign policy issues since 1990.

The two most important priorities of Austrian foreign policy have been the European Union and the states of Central and Eastern Europe since the end of the cold war. (The third priority has been the neighboring countries, the fourth the United States, the fifth the International Organizations, the sixth the neutrality and the seventh the support of

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

development.)¹⁰⁸ Austrian administrations perceived the EU as an area of peculiar ‘domestic politics’, and Central and Eastern European states as the most important places for Austrian investment and economic help. Thus, the identity of the Austrian governments contained the elements of the government of a ‘truly European country’, a ‘huge investor’ in the Central and Eastern European region furthermore the government of country that ‘cares of its Eastern post-communist fellows’. Hence, the support of the uploading process to the EU level of the Nabucco project offered an opportunity to the Austrian government to reproduce ‘Austria’s identity’ as a truly European country which is highly interested in the issues of Central and Eastern Europe.

The Austrian government successfully lobbied for the pipeline in the EU institutions, thus Nabucco was introduced in the Trans-European Networks by the European Commission.¹⁰⁹ This means that at that time not only OMV lobbied for Nabucco but the Austrian government attempted to upload the Nabucco to the EU level as the national interest of Austria.

One year later, the Ministers for Energy of Austria, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey came together “to speed up commercial, regulatory and legal work to build the Nabucco gas pipeline” in Vienna, in June 2006.¹¹⁰ Andris Piebalgs, the EU Energy Commissioner participated in the event as well, and together with the attendant ministers signed a statement regarding Nabucco. He said that “The European Commission welcomes the Nabucco project and will try to help to solve the technical and economic problems of transporting gas into the EU over different routes”.¹¹¹ Furthermore, “the EU will continue to support this project, not only politically, but also through [financing] feasibility studies.”¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Peter Fillzmaier and others, eds., *Internationale Politik* (International Politics) (Vienna, WuW UTB, 2006)

¹⁰⁹ Die Presse (Vienna). 30 June 2005.

¹¹⁰ Europolitics, 27 July 2006.

¹¹¹ People’s Daily (Beijing). 27 July 2006.

¹¹² Financial Times (London). 26 July 2006.

We can perceive the fact that the EU represented itself in this conference, as the total success of the uploading attempt of the Nabucco project to the EU level. From this time, Nabucco became a European project and slowly but steadily fewer and fewer people perceived it as a project of the consortium of Turkish-Bulgarian-Romanian-Hungarian-Austrian gas and oil companies.

However, this time the success probably was not entirely Austrian. One of the Nabucco Partner countries - Hungary - had joined to the EU in 2004, furthermore Romania and Bulgaria were to join in 2007, and they were keen on participating in everything that was related to the European Union. At the same time, this event was held in Vienna, as well as all other most important events regarding Nabucco, and the HQ of the Nabucco Gas Pipeline GmbH was located in Vienna too. Thus, we can claim that the whole Nabucco project was dominated by OMV and the Austrian government, and its uploading to the EU as well. However, EU institutions would not have been supported a sole Austrian project because it would have conflicted with their supranational identities. Hence, participation of other and future EU member states was necessary for the successful uploading process of the Austrian subnational and national interest groups.

4.3.2 Hungary changes its mind

Although Hungarian MOL had been a member of the Nabucco consortium at that time, the MOL and the Hungarian government ran parallel negotiations with Gazprom and the Kremlin about the Blue Stream Pipeline Project and signed documents about it.¹¹³ The two Russian interest groups (state owned Gazprom and the Kremlin) realized that Nabucco could really come into existence, and this pipeline could transport gas from the former USSR to Europe bypassing Russian territory. They perceived it as a threat to their interests, despite the fact that Nabucco could supply only five percent of the European gas demand. Thus, Europe

¹¹³ Népszabadság (Budapest). 21 June 2006.

would import the majority of its gas demands from state owned Gazprom after the finishing of Nabucco as well. Hence, Gazprom's position would not change significantly in the European gas market, and would stay the greatest partner of the EU regarding gas issues. The main problem was ideational because the material loss for the Gazprom would not be big with the existence of Nabucco. It means that the Nabucco gas pipeline project would pose a threat to the Gazprom's identity as the only one gas supplier of Europe from the East, which threatens the Kremlin's identity as the dominant actor of the post-soviet territories especially in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Thus, these two Russian international interest groups began to lobby for their Blue Stream pipeline projects in Hungary, and offered different advantages to the MOL and the Hungarian government.

Hungarian top officials, such as Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány and the Minister of Economics expressed their preference for Gazprom instead of Nabucco. For instance, Ferenc Gyurcsány told International Herald Tribune in March 2007 that Nabucco is 'a long dream and old plan. But we don't need dreams, we need gas.' However, 'Blue Stream is backed by a very strong will and a very strong organizational power'.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, Ferenc Gyurcsány expressed his confidence in Russia's reliability as an energy supplier partner and the desirability of bilateral relations with Russia in this regard in Hungarian Parliament as well.¹¹⁵

The biggest party of the government was the successor of the former state party of the socialism, and the leadership of the party was socialized in the socialism. Thus, the identity of this interest group gives a more positive meaning to Russia, than most of the interest groups in Europe. Probably, it is the reason why the Hungarian government was willing to cooperate openly with Russia in the case of Blue Stream and devalued Nabucco. Contrarily, the opposition - right wing parties - in Hungary was protesting for months against the Hungarian negotiations with Russia regarding Blue Stream and lobbied for Nabucco. Its reason is that all

¹¹⁴ International Herald Tribune (Paris). 12 March 2007.

¹¹⁵ Magyar Nemzet (Budapest). 26 March 2006.

of the opposition parties have had harshly anticommunist views and entire Russian elements of their identity since the system change, and it did not change profoundly.

Actually, the attitude to the socialist past is one of the most important cleavages in the Hungarian society,¹¹⁶ which is clearly noticeable in the Hungarian Parliament as well. Left wing parties evaluate socialism and the role of Russia of that era much more positively than right wing parties. Thus, the identity of the government (left wing) and the opposition (right wing) regarding their attitudes to Russia defined clearly their views about the European Nabucco and the Russian Blue Stream projects.

The international community began to pay attention to this issue only after the article in IHT had been published. However, what happened afterwards was exactly what Michael E. Smith pointed out in his research: when the government of an EU member state takes action alone without consulting other member states, they promptly begin to criticize the extravagant behavior. Thus, an obvious ‘social rule’ was noticeable within EU.¹¹⁷ For instance, Alfred Gusenbauer, Chancellor of Austria told that Austria expected support to the planned Nabucco project from all the EU member Eastern-European countries.¹¹⁸ Andris Piebalgs, the EU Energy Commissioner blamed Hungary in summer 2007 because of the evolved skeptical mood among the possible investors regarding Nabucco.¹¹⁹ Many reports and articles were published in influential European newspapers which harshly criticized the position of the Hungarian government concerning the gas pipeline issue.¹²⁰ It means that the EU as a community and as an interest group attempted to change the priority and identity of the Hungarian government to alter the national interest of Hungary toward a pro Nabucco thus a pro European stance.

¹¹⁶ András Körösenyi, Csaba Tóth, and Gábor Török, *A Magyar politikai rendszer* (The Hungarian Political System) (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2003), 135-147.

¹¹⁷ Smith 123.

¹¹⁸ Népszabadság (Budapest). 15 April 2007.

¹¹⁹ Magyar Nemzet (Budapest). 11 June 2007.

¹²⁰ Népszabadság (Budapest). 21 March 2007.

Furthermore, not only Europeans, but the foreign policy elite of the United States like officials, think tanks and American newspapers expressed their negative feelings about 'Budapest's too close relationship' with the Kremlin.¹²¹ In this case, the United States wanted to impede that one of the member of the West fall under Russian influence. According to Jutta Weldes, "the United States has consistently been represented as the leader of the West" since the World War II, which is one of the most important features of US identity.¹²² Thus, the United States could not allow to a Western country (Hungary), which was under its leadership, to build too close relationships with its geopolitical adversary in the Black Sea region and Central Asia.

The large amount of criticism was confused the Hungarian government and different ministers made different statements. The Hungarian Minister of Defence told to the American media during his visit in Washington DC in the end of April that 'If Hungary has to choose, it will choose the solution providing guarantee for common European energy supply, which is Nabucco.' However, two weeks later, the Minister of Foreign Affairs argued that 'It would be irresponsible to pledge to a project, which is not clear whether it is feasible.'¹²³

Finally, at the beginning of May, thanks to the criticism and pressure from the EU and the foreign policy elite of the United States, the Hungarian parliament voted almost unanimously for a proposition of the opposition giving priority to the Nabucco project instead of Blue Stream. Namely, Hungary 'downloaded' the Nabucco project from the EU level, and chose a European priority instead of its former priority. Thus, the European Nabucco project, which was uploaded by Austrian interest groups to the EU level, became the national interest of Hungary.

¹²¹ Népszabadság (Budapest). 7 April 2007.

¹²² Weldes 199.

¹²³ Magyar Nemzet (Budapest). 8 May 2007.

This downloading process was so successful that according to some analysts, the Hungarian government became the main proponent of the Nabucco project.¹²⁴ It has been very active in lobbying regarding Nabucco since the second half of 2007, and it tried to “re-upload” the Nabucco project to the EU level. For instance, Hungarian government organized a Nabucco-Forum,¹²⁵ the Azerbaijani president was invited to Hungary¹²⁶ and in the summer of 2008 the Hungarian prime minister visited Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, which are possible suppliers of gas for the Nabucco project. In addition, MOL executives took part in that visit too.¹²⁷ At the same time,

Hungary has proposed hosting a Nabucco summit in Budapest for state and industry leaders from the six Nabucco consortium countries, possible supplier and transit countries, and relevant international institutions, with the participation of the EU and the United States as political supporters of this project. ... Hungary has appointed one of its most senior diplomats, Mihaly Bayer, as full-time special envoy for promoting the Nabucco project with countries along the producer-transit-consumer chain and international organizations. Bayer is filling a role that seems to have been all but vacated by the EU’s Nabucco project coordinator, although Nabucco is still officially a top priority of the EU.¹²⁸

The positive attitude of the Hungarian government towards Nabucco was obvious at the Nabucco Conference in Budapest in January 2009. Hungary’s prime minister, Ferenc Gyurcsány – the same person who called the Nabucco project a dream two years ago – argued

¹²⁴ Euroasia Daily Monitor (Jamestown). 30 September 2008.

¹²⁵ Népszabadság (Budapest). 13 April 2007.

¹²⁶ Magyar Nemzet (Budapest). 19 February 2008.

¹²⁷ Magyar Nemzet (Budapest). 9 July 2008.

¹²⁸ Euroasia Daily Monitor (Jamestown). 30 September 2008.

that the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) should give 200-300 million Euros financial contribution for the Nabucco.¹²⁹ EBRD agreed and provided approximately 200 million Euros to the project.¹³⁰ These mean that the priority and the view about national interest of the Hungarian government regarding Nabucco have changed profoundly. However, they have not changed totally. Recent events have shown that Europeanisation and its 'downloading' process have its limits. Albeit the Hungarian government has changed its mind, and officially Nabucco became its priority, at the same time Hungarian government has not abandoned fully the negotiations with the Kremlin and the Gazprom and has just signed agreements about South Stream in March 2009.¹³¹

4.4 Conclusion

The Austrian and Hungarian case studies regarding Nabucco were intended to illustrate that national interest does not exist as it is traditionally perceived because national interest is never national but it is influenced by many actors of the international society. Interest groups like companies, political elite of countries, international organizations often have a great impact on the creation of national interest. However, the identification of the most important actors is not enough because it is only the first step. We need to realize the appropriate elements of the identity of these actors to understand how and why they influence the national interest of a state.

¹²⁹ Die Presse (Vienna). 28 January 2009.

¹³⁰ Die Presse (Vienna). 28 January 2005.

¹³¹ The New York Times (New York). 17 March 2009.

Chapter - 5 The Highly Important, Non-existent National Interest

The concept of national interest is extremely important for International Relations, because the majority of states use it as the major narrative regarding their foreign policy activities. Thus, if we would like to understand how international politics works, we need to understand national interest. It is perceived by every main IR theories, and they developed their own understanding of the issue. Most of these concepts take granted that the ‘national interest’ is the interest of a nation state (realists, partly constructivists) or at least this interest emerges from within the state via civil society (liberals). However, these views overemphasize the importance of the state regarding national interest, which leads misleading conclusions like the security of the state is the most important national interests for every country. Furthermore, state-centric approaches can not treat situations when the existence of a state is problematic (unrecognized states, failed states), and can not perceive the significance of the international economic community and international organizations in the creation of national interest.

In my thesis, I provided a theoretical framework which highlights a pluralist view of politics and offers a constructivist theoretical framework to show that the so-called ‘national interest’ is actually never national. ‘National interest’ is basically particular because it is a product of socially constructed interests of different interest groups from distinct levels of the international society. According to this view, the inquiry of national interest has to focus on interest groups and their identity to reveal the phenomena regarding the evolution of national interest. In this concept, the national interest is what the administration of a state, which is an interest group as well, declare. However, this national interest is not the traditionally perceived national interest because it represents the interests of different interest groups.

Thus, it can not represent the interest of a nation state. Accordingly, I argue that on the one hand national interest is one of the most important phenomena in international politics, but on the other hand it does not exist.

My concept builds a bridge between the liberal and constructivist understanding of the national interest, and it puts together the most influential constructivist results regarding the issue. Its base is the Wendtian assumption that “identities are the basis of the interests”,¹³² and adopts Martha Finnemore’s view regarding the importance of international society. In addition, it accepts Jutta Weldes’ claim that actually state officials declare the national interest. Furthermore, it follows the liberals’ pluralist point of view of the politics. My main contribution to the study of national interest is that I provided a general theoretical framework for the already existent results of constructivist scholars. This concept widens the spectrum of actors and accepts the social conditions of the different situations regarding the national interest. It is the reason why it can treat the phenomena which state-centric approaches – the role of actors outside the state – and liberal concepts – the importance of identity - can not in the same time.

Charles A. Beard provided a similar view of national interest in the 1930’s when he stated that “a realistic view of the world must include” interests and ideas in the same time, in addition he pointed out the importance of interest groups in the creation of national interest as well.¹³³ Unfortunately, he did not theorize his views, but conducted empirical researches. However, his argument is valid after eighty years as well, and is used by scholars of International Relations.

Probably, the importance of the national interest will not change significantly in the future and will stay as important in the discourses of the states regarding foreign policy as it was in Beard’s time in the United States. Thus, the study of national interest should be one of

¹³² Wendt 1992, 398.

¹³³ Burchill 1995. 12.

the focuses of the scientific research of International Relations. My concept intends to contribute to this research and offers a framework to get a more sophisticated picture regarding the processes and phenomena of the creation of national interest.

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