DISCOURSE STRATEGIES IN RESPONSE TO THE CRIMEAN CRISIS: THE CASES OF LITHUANIA AND SLOVAKIA

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Submitted to

Central European University

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In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Supervisor: Professor Michael Merlingen

Wordcount: 16,633

Budapest, Hungary

2014

Abstract

The responses to the Russian annexation of Crimea, still a *de iure* a part of Ukrainian territory have been very different across the European Union, as have been the reactions to the proposal of the sanction regime against Russia. There is an apparent divide between countries which were rather vocal in their rhetoric towards Russia and those which were, in contrast, very vigilant. Lithuania, whose energy security as well as economic links are strongly attached to Russia, was one of the states that acted against its material interests and pursued different rhetoric than other small states with similar dependence, such as Slovakia. Through discourse analysis, two case studies of Slovakia and Lithuania are investigated in detail, while arguing that the different responses of these states to the Crimean Crisis are essentially linked to their identities in relation to Russia. The thesis demonstrates that by framing through specific discourse strategies, material relations by themselves do not matter.

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Introduction

The responses to the Crimean crisis of 2014 - the annexation of what is still *de iure* a part of Ukrainian territory - have been very different across the European Union, as have been the reactions to the proposal of the sanction regime against Russia. There is a divide between countries which were rather vocal in their rhetoric towards Russia and those which were very cautious and careful in their public declarations. This peculiar dissonance of reactions can be attributed to many factors. What is puzzling, however, is the divergent reactions of some small states of the European Union (EU) towards the Crimean crisis and the imposition of sanctions. It could be anticipated that small countries that are highly dependent on Russia with regard to energy supplies as well as amount of foreign trade inflow would be less belligerent in their approach towards it. Given their economic interests, an antagonistic position against Russia is a risky business.

Among the "hawkish" states that were articulate towards Russia, it was Poland and the Baltic states - Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia[1] which were rather contentious, countries which have a turbulent historical experience with Russia. Lithuania stands out from the crowd as the most vocal in its public statements condemning Russia's actions, delivered by Lithuanian political elites who blame Russia for the destabilization of Eastern Ukraine and the Eastern European region. Moreover, Lithuania openly supports sanctions against Russia.

On the other hand, there are small EU member states[2] that have received international attention for being overtly friendly towards Russia, described as having "torn loyalties", such

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[1]Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia are also the only ex-Soviet states that joined the European Union or North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

[2] When it comes to economic concerns, this showed to be a symptomatic of big countries such as France, for example. Despite pressure from the EU and the United States, France did not cede an expensive warship deal with Russia.

as Bulgaria, Cyprus, Hungary or Slovakia.[3] The Slovak prime minister has been criticized by the local media for his ambiguous attitude, avoiding taking a clear position on Russia for the violation of Ukraine's integrity and its sovereignty. With regards to the position of Slovakia towards Ukrainian crisis, he said that "we have the right to tell someone that they are breaching international law, however, let's keep in mind our national state interests"[4]. These are energy and business-related interests which interlink Slovakia closely with Russia.

The question that arises is why some small states like Lithuania whose energy security as well as economic links are strongly attached to Russia go against their economic interests and act differently/use different rhetoric than other small states with similar dependence? The Crimean crisis can be understood as bringing about a significant change challenging the established paradigms that used to provide a framework for both thinking and action and as such affects individuals, communities as well as whole societies. The annexation of a de iure Ukrainian territory by Russia exposes grievances of the past and provides room for storytelling and identity (re)assertion. By focusing on the cases of Slovakia and Lithuania, this thesis seeks to demonstrate that material relations do not matter in themselves, but only once they have been framed in and through discourse. Building on the assumption that stories that are told about states at specific, key moments essentially form their identities, I will apply the concepts of *storytelling* and *threat-framing* while drawing attention to the interplay of political and economic forces as reflected in the foreign policy positions of both Slovakia and Lithuania on the Crimean crisis.

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[3] "Slovakia Nurtures Special Ties to Russia, despite EU Sanctions." *Reuters*. 22 May 2014. http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/05/22/ukraine-crisis-slovakia-idUKL6N0O847Y20140522 (Accessed 5/28/2014)

[4] "Hľaďme Na Vlastné Záujmy, Povedal Fico K Ukrajine." SME, 4 Mar. 2014. <http://www.sme.sk/c/7123291/hladme-na-vlastne-zaujmy-povedal-fico-k-ukrajine.html> (Accessed 5/15/14)

Leonard and Popescu (2007) looked at the relations of old and new member states of the EU with regard to Russia and identified a divide into five categories: 'Trojan Horses' (Cyprus and Greece), 'Strategic Partners' (France, Germany, Italy and Spain), 'Friendly Pragmatists' (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, Hungary, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia and Slovakia), 'Frosty Pragmatists' (Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, the Netherlands, Romania, Sweden, and the United Kingdom) and the 'New Cold Warriors' (Lithuania and Poland) which can be generally placed on an axis stretching from those who view Russia as a partner to those who see it as a threat.[5] In their study, Leonard and Popescu claim to have tried to "avoid the euphemistic phrases and diplomatic practices that cloak tensions within the EU and between the third countries", with the goal of "not to stigmatize particular countries". Their approach focuses on the examination of the "areas where the policies of individual member states have undercut common European objectives". In contrast, however, I argue that it is exactly the nuances in the discourse that deserve special attention, as they explain how the relations towards Russia are shaped and what might be the underlying factors that attribute to the friendly/hostile relations. To this end, I will look at the discourse formed around the Crimean crisis, as it provides an example where the intersubjective understandings that rest on shared historical experience gained the potential to resurface in the states' narratives.

My argument is that the different responses of Slovakia and Lithuania to the Crimean Crisis are essentially linked to the countries' identities in relation to Russia. Lithuania has a rather long history of being part of Russian Empire. After the fall of the empire, Russian influence in the country continued as Lithuania later became part of the USSR. It remained part of the Soviet space until 1990 and to this day it prides itself on being the first Soviet Republic to declare its independence from Moscow. This thesis argues that the Lithuanian

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[5] LEONARD, M., POPESCU, N. *A Power Audit of EU-Russia Relations*. European Council on Foreign Relations. 2007.

identity and the way history and the experience of Russian invasion was narrated, sparked off fears for its integrity as the situation in Ukraine escalated, which was further accentuated by Lithuania's political elites. In the case of Slovakia, in contrast, negative historical experiences were downplayed in the light of "national economic interest" and projection of Russia as a long and critical partner of the country. This has been underscored more often than not with the notion of Ukraine hindering the effectiveness of cooperation between Slovakia and Russia.

The first chapter of the thesis is devoted to the discussion of identity and identity construction. Identity is presented as constituted by social interaction, drawing from the constructivist international relations' literature. The debate further revolves around the notions of "self" and the "other", where the "other" is presented as an object of threat framing and securitization moves. It sets the theoretical framework that is the basis of the following chapters. In the second chapter, historical relations with Russia and legacies of both Slovakia and Lithuania are presented in connection to identity formation and development, leading up to the period of independence gained in the 1990s. A subsection introduces the economic-material relations of Russia with Slovakia and Lithuania, respectively. Empirical chapters, the culmination of the thesis, follow where through an in-depth discourse analysis, the cases of "storytelling" and "framing" are presented in effect.

1   Theoretical and Methodological Framework

This thesis argues that the difference in responses of some small states to the crisis in Crimea were not only a matter of economic-material relations with Russia, because these fail to explain the apparent divergence between foreign policy positions. Identity, perceptions and projections of Russia, however, seem to fill in this gap. The discourse formed around Crimea demonstrates how the intersubjective understandings that rest on shared historical experience with Russia resurfaced in the narratives of both Slovakia and Lithuania and provided fertile environment for identity re-assertion. To better comprehend how the issue of the Russian annexation of Crimea was constructed in line, or not, with the preexistent identity of both Slovakia and Lithuania, we need conceptual tools that provide a framework for study.

1.1   Constructing the "Self"

According to Wendt, identities and interests are not exogenously given; rather they are "inherently relational", acquired through socialization and interaction. Wendt argues that even though the distribution of power and capabilities has an effect on the manner in which states act towards their enemies and friends (K. Waltz), how it effects them depends on "the intersubjective understandings and expectations, on the "distribution of knowledge", which are constitutive to the states' perceptions of "self" and "other". As Wendt stresses, it is "collective meanings that constitute the structures which organize our actions." Through taking part in the creation of collective meanings, actors "acquire identities", which are described as "stable, role-specific understandings and expectations about self."[6] The identities of actors, in our case, the states, are, however, not fixed - they change depending on the social context and situations in which they work. In the anarchical environment of international

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[6] WENDT, A. Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics. International Organization. Vol. 46 (2). 1992. p. 397-407

relations, the way identities are constituted and developed is primarily based on the "preservation or "security" of the self." Depending on the how the "self" identifies itself with the "other", the concepts of security vary. How an actor views the "other" largely determines its interests, preferences and behavior in the international system. Through the process of social interaction with the "other", intersubjective meanings and ideas about the "self" and the "other" are created which may lead to pro-social, or antagonistic behavior, for example. Further socialization and interactions either leads the actors to drop the descriptions they hold about each other or it reinforces them, until the images of the "self" and the "other" become relatively stable in character. However, this process of constructing and deconstructing identities remains always at work and is subject to change depending on the changing context.[7]

A more linguistically sensitive understanding of "creating one's self" is provided by Ringmar who points out that "states are constructed through the stories told about them." A state cannot be a legitimate entity unless recognized as such by its own citizens, and one cannot be a legitimate actor in the international arena unless accepted as such by other actors - members of the international community. Therefore, the pursuit of recognition on both levels is an extremely important matter. How to achieve this? Ringmar postulates that shaping one's appearance consists in "telling a story".[8] Yet one cannot tell just any story; one's story also need followers and should appeal to the audience and attract it in a way that it virtually internalizes the narrative to an extent that it is prepared to retell the story further. These stories about states have, however, a property of changing with the changing order. It is possible that the world in which a particular narrative has been produced might no longer be true

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[7] WENDT, 1992; NEUMANN; 1996.

[8] RINGMAR, E. On the Ontological Status of the State. European Journal of International Relations. London: SAGE Publications. 1996, p. 438.

tomorrow. This fluidity provides an opportunity for potential "storytellers" to enter the picture and employ a kind of alternative history, whose truth or falsehood is, actually, relatively irrelevant.

As Ringmar points out, "without an identity, we have no idea who we are". And as simplistic and trivial this statement may seem, it leads us to think harder about what meaning we ascribe to our existence and how we present ourselves before the others. This is because, after our self-description has been created, it needs to be acknowledged and recognized by others. The stories we tell about ourselves need audience, because without it, we cease to be who we claim we are. In order for our stories to be granted recognition, we make the following demands on our listeners:

"(1) we want our existence to be acknowledged,

(2) we want respect,

(3) we want individuality,

(4) we want affiliation"[9].

During the process of demanding recognition, we need attention from those who are to grant it – we need an audience. We want to win their respect so that they listen to us, and to this end we demand equal treatment. However, this is not to suppress our individuality as that is what makes us different from others. By seeking acknowledgement and respect, we also look for partnership and alliances; which, as a part of the process, also generates antagonisms and enemies.

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[9] RINGMAR.E. "The International Politics of Recognition." In: Erik Ringmar & Thomas Lindemann, eds.: The International Politics of Recognition. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers. 2010. p. 7

1.2 Constructing the "Other"

The way identities and interests are constructed shapes the social reality and interaction of actors operating in the arena of international relations. Since the political reality is "socially constructed", some issues emerge as more dominant than others. With regards to security, Alder says that understanding it "must not begin just with a set of previously constructed and thus reified categories, but also, and primarily, with the recognition that policy-makers may have the ability to act upon the world with new knowledge and new understandings about how to organize security".[10] It is therefore important to understand that state behavior is shaped by both domestic factors as well as by the external interaction with members of the international community. When we then want to talk about the problem of security, we need to take into account the two-fold social construction of the discourse. Thus, to a large extent, the discourse strategies and practices are dependent upon who takes part in the construction process of the discourse.

Different actors may use different means of calculation and social manipulation to set the security agenda and construct security perceptions. The fashioning of a threat, the "other" which embodies a potential risk to national security can be shaped by the way actors in authority make use of the narratives and "framing". Frames are "mental structures that shape the way we see the world". According to Lakoff, "Framing is about getting language that fits your worldview. It is not just language. The ideas are primary - and language carries those ideas, evokes those ideas".[11]

Framing describes attributing meanings to things, providing definitions and having the ability to interpret certain events. In doing so, however, the "story-teller" in authority needs an

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[10]ADLER, E. "Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics." European Journal of International Relations. 1997. p. 345

[11]LAKOFF, G. *Don't Think of an Elephant!: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate*. Chelsea Green Publishing. 2008. p. 1-4

audience which has to be receptive should the narrative be successful. It is the way issues are framed that actors may generate mobilization and social action or, rather, downplay gravity of a certain matter. When frames are being constructed, they are produced in such a fashion that they support one interpretation over another, "drawing attention to certain aspects of an issue while minimizing attention to others".[12]

For Entman, the process of framing involves "selection" and "salience". The process itself requires us to select "some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem or definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation".[13] Depending on what "framing actors" can make of the process; some frames may be more successful in shaping than others. Vertzberger[14] suggests that foreign policy decision-makers often use history and 'historical analogies', 'metaphors' and 'extrapolations'.[15] He terms the decision-makers as 'practical-intuitive historians' who use historical references as devices to frame certain situations or problems that occur in the realm of politics. These frames help them to address foreign policy issues and provide options to decipher them, and potentially also fix them.

Neumann discusses the construction of 'otherness' with regard to European identity and the role played by the Russian 'other' in its formation, in particular. Russia is described as having been consistently "seen as an irregularity".[16]

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[12]SAMARAS, A. N. *Frames and Framing in International Relations*. Defensor Pacis. The Defense Analyses Institute Review. p. 71

[13]ENTMAN, R. M. *Framing: Towards Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm*. Journal of Communication. Vol. 43 (4). 1993, p. 52

[14] Unlike constructivists, who concentrate on intersubjectiveness, Vertzberger focuses on the subjective, mental processes. His work, however, contributes to the discussion on framing and is included in this section as a result.

[15]VERTZBERGER, Y. Y. I. *Foreign Policy Decisionmakers as Practical-intuitive Historians: Applied History and Its Shortcomings.* International Studies Quarterly. Vol. 30 (2). 1986.

[16] NEUMANN, I. B. *Russia as Europe's Other*. EUI Working Papers. San Domenico: European University Institute. Robert Schuman Centre. 1996.

1.3 Framing a Threat

"Threat framing" could be described as "the process whereby particular agents develop specific interpretive schemas about what should be considered a threat or risk, how to respond to this threat, and who is responsible for it."[17] In the process of threat framing, the actors may use different means of social power to evoke seriousness of a certain issue. This can be achieved through the functions of language, such as the use of particular phrases, words or symbols. To be able to understand how social actors constitute a "threat", we need to study the discursive realm and circumstances in which the political reality unfolds.

1.3.1 Securitization

The analysis of "self" and "the other" and the framing of a threat is inherently linked to the idea of security. The concept of securitization overlaps with the previous discussion, however, for the purposes of this thesis it will be just briefly touched upon. Constructing something as a "security" issue is, according to Buzan, Waever and de Wilde "the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics". The process itself is referred to as "securitization", "a more extreme version of politicization". With regard to security in some areas, a threat will rarely arise outside of the wider "security contexts", such as the state of war which may threaten survival directly. Based on the presentation of being existential in character, any public matter can be located on a scale from "nonpoliticized", through "politicized" to "securitized". Just as some issues do not attract attention, others can be addressed with special significance and constructed in "existential terms" through the act of securitization, where an existential threat is constructed as endangering our identity and our notion of "self". The

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process of securitization is intersubjective, highly dependent on the audience to whom it should resonate with. This provides the actors concerned (not necessarily decision-makers) with justifications for considering extraordinary measures that go beyond the usual practices. When an issue is "securitized", it can provide favorable basis, among other things, for the "exploitation of threats" through legitimization of actors in power to handle certain things "with less democratic control and constraint".[18]

In the discourse, the word "security" as such need not be mentioned; it is about how things are framed to evoke security concerns. This is more often than not pursued through dramatization and accentuation of a certain issue, constructing an understanding that is shared between the audience (if securitization is successful, that is), through a "speech act", while "it is not interesting as a sign referring to something more real; it is the utterance itself that is the act."[19] The authenticity of such a statement does not concern us, since it is by nature subjective; the focus is on how it was formulated.

Balzacq brings in another perspective and views securitization rather as a "pragmatic act", what he refers to as a "sustained argumentative practice aimed at convincing a target audience to accept, based on what it knows about the world, the claim that a specific development is threatening enough to deserve an immediate policy to curb it." For Balzacq, "securitization results from unarticulated assumptions about security's symbolic power" and "for a discursive process to succeed, it needs a strategy of reasoning and persuasion."[20] To better comprehend the process of securitization, he therefore pays closer attention to context, the status of those who create the discourse as well as the effects it stimulates in the audience.

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[18] BUZAN, B., WAEVER, O., DE WILDE, J. *Security: A New Framework For Analysis*. Lynne Rienner Publishers. 1998. p. 29

[19] Ibid., p. 26

[20] BALZACQ, T.: *Constructivism and Securitization Studies*. In: Myriam Dunn Cavelty&Victor Mauer,, eds., *Handbook of Security Studies*. London: Routledge. 2010.

The Crimean crisis has a provided fertile environment for identity re-assertion, and for particular national narratives to gain significance over others. To better understand how the issue of Russian annexation of Crimea was constructed through discourse, I will pay particular attention to the concepts of 'othering', 'framing' and 'storytelling'. As the empirical chapters will demonstrate, the intersubjective understandings of the 'self' and 'other' create expectations of behavior and have implications for foreign policy actions. How the policy-makers 'frame' the debate constructs political reality within which threat perceptions are amplified or, in contrast, deemphasized.

1.4 Methodology

In the previous sections, my intention was to provide the theoretical foundations for the research and briefly introduce concepts and conceptual tools that are essential for the empirical part, which is central to the thesis. The subject of my interest is identity, construction of the "self" and "othering" with relation to Russia (and possibly, Ukraine, on the side of Slovakia). According to Sjöstedt, "in a discourse analysis, the starting point is to attempt to reconstruct the context of the phenomenon being studied, as the understanding of how the world is constructed allows for a better explanation of why certain beliefs and behavior come about."[21] To this end, in the second chapter I provide a discussion of the historical relations with Russia of both Slovakia in Lithuania. I also address the economic-material factors to point out the interplay of political and economic forces as they are reflected in their foreign policy positions with regard to discourse around the Crimean crisis. Close attention is paid to identity formation and the way history was narrated in line, or not, with the preexistent identities. To demonstrate this, I will analyze selected speeches provided by relevant political actors in both Slovakia and Lithuania. As Milliken suggests, "a discourse

[21] SJÖSTEDT, R. *The Discursive Origins of a Doctrine. Norms, Identity, and Securitization under Harry S. Truman and George W. Bush*. Foreign Policy Analysis. Vol. 3. 2007. p. 239

analysis should be based upon a set of texts by different people presumed (according to the research focus) to be authorized speakers/writers of a dominant discourse or to think and act within alternative discourses".[22]

According to Hansen, "the productive nature of language implies that policy discourse is seen as relying upon particular constructions of problems and subjectivities, but that it is also through discourse that these problems and subjectivities are constructed in the first place."[23] I am seeking to identify at the discursive strategies and constitutive elements of the current discourse surrounding the Russian-Ukrainian crisis, more specifically, the Russian annexation of Crimea. The timeframe is limited as the conflict has not been settled *de iure*, so I will refer to events starting from the mid-February until mid-May. I assessed the speeches published in both local and international media or governmental/institutional websites, majority of which was provided by official state press agencies.

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[22] MILLIKEN, J. *The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods*. European Journal of International Relations. Vol. 5. p. 233

[23] HANSEN, L. *Security as Practise: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*. Routledge. 2006. p. 15

2   Historical legacies

This chapter presents the historical relations with Russia and legacies of both Slovakia and Lithuania in connection to identity formation and development, leading up to the period of independence gained in the 1990s and beyond. At the end of each section, it addresses the economic-material factors and material dependency on Russia. The background provides a better explanation as to why certain narratives and storytelling gained prominence in the construction of national identities of both states and how these were framed to construct the discourse around Crimea.

2.1   Slovak Identity and Russia

With regard to the public discourse on Russia in Slovakia, in comparison with Poland or the Baltic States, Duleba argues that Slovakia can be characterized as a "quasi-Russophile" country, which he explains by pointing towards the "special role of Russia in the political-historical identity of the Slovak national elite". Slovakia had "neither too dramatic, nor so many negative experiences with Russian imperialism" and the perception of historical relations with Russia rather reflect the ideas of "Pan-Slavism" and "Slovak Brotherhood." With relation to Ukraine, however, the relations are described by historical "coolness", underpinned by the persisting myth of viewing Ukrainians as "bandits", which was inherited from the communist era.[24]

The idea of a common Slavic background became prevalent in the 18-19th centuries as part of the wave of national revolutions which rushed through Central and Eastern Europe, also called the "Spring of Nations", and it became a framework for emerging political aspirations. Slavs that were living within the multi-national Hapsburg Empire sought cultural

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[24] DULEBA, A. *Slovakia's Relations with Russia and Eastern Neighbours*. In: Gabor Foti and Zsuzsa Ludvig, eds.: EU-Russian relations and the Eastern Partnership - Central-East European Member-State Interests and Positions. 2009. p. 10

paradigms based on common ethnic heritage that would enable them to demand political legitimacy and recognition among other European nations. The movement of 'Pan-Slavism' originated inside intellectual circles of scholars, writers and poets who tried to develop and spread national awareness as well as the sense of Slavic unity. They created a platform for opposition to the 'Germanization' and 'Magyarization' policies burgeoning in the monarchy and sought support of their fellows. In the revolutionary year of 1848, a "Slavonic Congress" was organized in Prague where the representatives of the Slavic nations[25] of the Austrian Empire met to discuss their future. Both structure and goal of the Congress were unclear, and there were many clashes in the opinions of the nation leaders presenting the position of their delegation, however, a document called a *Manifesto to the Nations of Europe* was drafted.[26] This manifesto was substantial in the sense that it demanded freedom and equality of the oppressed Slavic nations within Europe and externally, it was aimed at exhibiting Slavic unity.

The political agenda of the Slovaks was focused on gaining cultural and in part also political autonomy in the Hungarian part of the Empire. The first consistent political program was created by Ľudovít Štúr who argued that unification with Russia was the only viable and possible alternative.[27] However, the Hungarian leadership promoted the ethnic principle and concept of a Hungarian political nation where the Slovak political plans had no place. The revolutionary flames in the Austro-Hungarian Empire[28] were harshly stamped out and the

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[25] Among the participants of the Congress, there were Czechs, Croats, Slovaks, Serbs, Poles, Russians and Ukranians present. For more, see: ORTON, D. L. The Prague Slav Congress of 1848. New York: Columbia University Press. 1978. p. 62

[26] ORTON, D. L., 1978. p. 87

[27] Matula, Vladimír. "Ľudovít Štúr a Myšlienka Slovanskej Vzájomnosti." <http://www.stur.sk/prispevky/vzajomnost2.htm> (Accessed 5/17/2014)

[28] Hungarian revolution for the autonomy from Vienna was suppressed with the help of the Russian Tsar.

absolutist government did not allow national sentiments to jeopardize its reestablished grip on power.

2.1.1 *Pro-Russian Concepts of Statehood*

The historical experience of revolution left a mark on Slovak political thinking and the Pan-Slavic ideas remained on the agenda of some Slovak intellectuals. The issue of Slovak autonomy became a matter of discussion again during the First World War and especially after, when the conceptions of Slovak statehood were proposed in the light of the principle of self-determination of nations endorsed by the U.S. President Woodrow Wilson. He officially acknowledged the right of self-determination of nations living under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and correspondingly, in the aftermath of the First World War, a number of states' declarations of independence followed. The process of the establishment of the new states was, however, not that easy and it was preceded by a long struggle for recognition, acceptance and support, both domestic and international. The demands of the states as new members of the international community were not only of spatial character. These demands comprised, for the most part, acknowledgement of national identity and its relevance in the European region.

Among the possible orientations of a Slovak future, there re-emerged the pro-Russian concept based on "Slavic solidarity".[29] This was promoted by Slovak Russophile politicians both at home and abroad. However, these politicians had to face competing platforms and proposals among which the idea of Czechoslovakism gained prominence. Finally, it was this design which "helped legitimize Czechoslovakia as a nation-state" and "made the Czechs and

[29] HRONSKÝ, M., PEKNÍK, M. *Martinská deklarácia. Cesta slovenskej politiky k vzniku Česko-Slovenska*. Bratislava: VEDA. 2008. p. 9

Slovaks appear stronger against the Germans and Magyars, respectively."[30] The Czechoslovak state endured until 1938 when it was divided by the Munich agreement of the major European powers (France, United Kingdom, Italy) which allowed Germany to get hold of the Czechoslovak territories. On March 14, 1939, the creation of the first Slovak republic was announced. Day after, German troops marched in the Czech lands and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was declared. Sovereignty for the first Slovak republic was from its very conception determined by its allegiance to Germany.

What allowed Slovakia to be on the side of the victorious powers in the Second World War was the National Uprising of 1944. Slovak rebel "guerrillas" fought against the entry of the German *Wehrmacht* on the Slovak territory and against the authoritarian government led by President Jozef Tiso. The battles against the Nazis continued until the liberation of the country in the spring of 1945 with the help of Red Army troops. This event presents a milestone in Slovak historical memory and is often commemorated upon visits of Russian officials to Slovakia.

2.1.2   The Communist Rule

The liberation was followed 41 years of Soviet rule through the Communist, one-party government of restored Czechoslovakia. In 1946, the last free elections in Czechoslovakia were held, however, following the governmental crisis and subsequent coup d'état in 1948, the Communists finally took over power in the country.

The political affiliation of Czechoslovakia to the Soviet Union was hinted at during the war in December, 1943, when Eduard Beneš, President in exile, signed the Soviet-Czechoslovak alliance treaty of friendship, mutual assistance, and postwar cooperation. This

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[30] BAKKE, E. *The making of Czechoslovakism in the First Czechoslovak Republic*. In: Veröffentlichungen des Collegium Carolinum: Band 101. *Loyalitäten in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik 1918-1938: Politische, nationale und kulturelle Zugehörigkeiten*. München. 2004, p. 43

treaty laid the foundations for Czechoslovakia's foreign policy for the next decades and was also one of the pillars of building Soviet influence in Central Europe.

Hope for change came with the democratization processes in the Communist Party and the society, which took place in the spring of 1968. In these advancements, the society saw an opportunity for the gradual enforcement of fundamental rights and freedoms, although the boundaries were still to be determined by the reformist communist leadership. One result of this period was the establishment of the federal arrangement of Czechoslovakia. Slovakia restored its statehood in the form of the Slovak Socialist Republic. The reform process was interrupted, however, by the arrival of the intervention armies of five Warsaw Pact countries on August, 21, 1968. The intervention was followed by the so-called policy of "normalization" based on the requirements of the Soviet Union. All of the democratic left-overs brought by the "Prague spring of 1968" were destroyed and censorship was reinstated, followed by the persecution of civil society activists and massive purges in the Communist Party. The occupation resulted in hundreds of casualties and injured and hundreds of thousands people emigrating abroad to escape the repressive regime.

Political thaw occurred only in the mid-eighties during the period of change in the Soviet Union under the influence of Mikhail Gorbachev and his "Perestroika". The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia officially proclaimed its allegiance to the Soviet model, but in practice, the party leadership tried to hinder these reformist processes. In Czechoslovakia, Perestroika basically did not exist, because no major changes were made. Dissatisfaction and disillusionment in society grew into spontaneous demonstrations. One of the first in Bratislava, Slovakia on March 25, 1988, also known as the "candle demonstration" was brutally dispersed by the State Security. Massive demonstrations of students in January 1989 (the "Palach Week" in Prague) were an indication that the communist regime was slowly crumbling and could no longer rely on support from Moscow. On November, 16-17,

the student demonstrations led to the formation of a strong political opposition, including writers, intellectuals, actors, and other cultural figures. This resulted in an open confrontation with the regime and its final demise. In the first free elections that took place in 1990, the opposition parties won, and formed a new, democratic government.

2.1.3 *Between the 'East' and the 'West'*

On January, 1, 1993 independent Slovak republic was formed. As a young country, it had to face difficult economic, social and cultural problems, including serious domestic battles with regard to the nature of the newly established regime. Both governments of Vladimír Mečiar[31], leader of the Movement for Democratic Slovakia Party, emphasized that the integration of Slovakia into the EU and NATO structures was the main priority of the country's foreign policy. However, "due to the growing tension between the Slovak government and representatives of the EU and NATO, the importance of bilateral relations with Russia gradually increased during the second half of the 1990s."[32]

One of the reasons for the inability of the Slovak government to move away from Russian influence was the strong economic orientation towards Russia. Before 1990, an estimate of 30-40 percent of the industrial capacity of Slovakia was dependent upon Soviet markets.[33] Another issue that drove Slovakia further from the West was the authoritarian style of Mečiar's governance. Non-compliance with the Western democratic norms disqualified Slovakia from the first round of enlargement to both the EU and the NATO. Prime Minister addressed the situation accordingly: "If they don't want us in the West, we shall turn East", [34]

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[31] Mečiar led the Slovak government both before and after independence - in 1992-1994 and in 1994-1998.

[32] MARUŠIAK, J. Slovakia's Eastern Policy - from the Trojan Horse of Russia to "Eastern Multivectoralism. In: Internaitonal Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs. 2013. Vol. 21 (1-2-4), p. 45.

[33] Ibid.

[34] In: WOLF, K. "Podozrivá zmluva.". Domino efekt. 1993. p. 2

and as Duleba describes it, "Mečiar's overestimation of the importance of the economic and political relations with Russia on the on hand and his inability to defend the national interests of Slovakia in relations with the EU and the US on the other, led Slovakia to an international deadlock."[35] The new government formed by Mikuláš Dzurinda after the key elections of 1998 tried to send a strong message to the West and demonstrate its desire to put Slovakia "back on track" to the EU and NATO accession. In 2004, the Slovak Republic became member of both organizations. Russia remained a strategic partner in both energy security and trade area, however, the post-Mečiar governments tried to set up a more balanced Eastern policy, seeking, for instance, closer relations with the countries that are now part of the Eastern Partnership initiative.

The governments led by Robert Fico (2006-2010, 2012-present) demonstrate a trend towards "more sympathy for and understanding of Russia's position concerning some key issues of international security".[36] Domestically, Fico's administration emphasized especially the material linkages that connect Slovakia closely to Russia.

2.1.4 Economic-material Relations of Slovakia with Russia

Slovak-Russian economic cooperation is largely defined by the purchase and transit of energy resources. Due to its insufficient mineral reserves, Slovakia is largely dependent on its imports from Russia. The main import commodities include natural gas, oil, nuclear fuel, hard coal, iron ore.[37] Overall imports from Russia accounted for cca. 10% during the past years. To Russia, Slovakia exports mainly cars, electrical machinery and equipment, stationery and

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[35] DULEBA, 2009. p. 16

[36] DULEBA, 2009. p. 9

[37] "Russian-Slovak Trade and Economic Cooperation."Embassy of the Russian Federation to the Slovak Republic. <http://www.rusemb.sk/svk/Rusko-slovenske-vztahy/spravka/> (Accessed 5/26/2014)

printing products, medications, malt and consumables.[38] In 2010, machinery, equipment and vehicles made up 74.5% of total exports to Russia; in 2011 it became 83%.[39] Car export constitutes a considerable component of Slovak GDP and therefore the Russia market is of great importance to the national income.

Other than that, Slovakia is a strategic transit territory through which important pipelines for transporting Russian gas and oil are built and regulated to deliver supplies to the Western consumers through connectors in the Czech Republic and Austria. As for Slovakia, Russian supply of gas accounts for 83% of its total supply[40]. The gas crisis of January 2009 demonstrated Slovakia's energy vulnerability in full scope when gas supplies to Slovakia were cut off due to Russian-Ukrainian dispute over gas prices. Due to the unexpected disruption in supply, Slovakia as both the transit country and a recipient suffered from enormous economic damages - according to some estimates, "Slovakia lost 100 million Euros a day, or 1 billion Euros over the duration of the entire crisis, and the gas-cut related recession led to a 1-1.5 percent decrease in GDP".[41] The Russian-Ukrainian gas crisis severely damaged good relations with Slovakia's Eastern neighbor. This conflict was eventually resolved, though it caused considerable economic damage not only for the parties involved, but also for

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[38] Ibid.

[39] "Russian-Slovak Trade and Economic Cooperation." RusWeb.sk. <http://www.rusweb.sk/sk/zijem-na-slovenku/financie/rusko-slovenska-obchodna-a-hospodarska-spolupraca.html> (Accessed 5/26/2014)

[40] "Conscious Uncoupling." The Economist. 05 Apr. 2014.
<http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21600111-reducing-europes-dependence-russian-gas-possiblebut-it-will-take-time-money-and-sustained> (Accessed 5/20/2014)

The level of energy dependence is defined as a percentage of net imports of the gross domestic consumption, and it demonstrates to what extent a country depends on energy imports with regard to other countries.

[41]NOSKO, A., ŠEVCE, P. The Evolution of Energy Security in the Slovak Republic. 29 Sept. 2010.
http://www.ensec.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=262:the-evolution-of-energy-security-in-the-slovak-republic&catid=110:energysecuritycontent&Itemid=366 (Accessed 5/28/2014)

the numerous countries that were dependent of the Russian gas as well as Ukrainian pipeline system.

2.2 Lithuanian Identity and Russia

Lithuania has history of an independent entity already in 12th century Europe. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania was founded by the Baltic tribe of Lithuanians, and in the 15th century became the largest state on the continent.[42] In 1569 a union of dynasties took place and the Commonwealth with Poland was established. This political arrangement was terminated upon the invasion of the Russian Empire in 1772. During the years of 1772-1795 three partitions of Poland took place which resulted in the annexation of the Polish-Lithuanian territories by Russia, Austria and Prussia. The commonwealth ceased to exist as did the political, cultural and religious institutions in these lands. Lithuanian territory became part of the Russian Empire, which enforced its rule in the country, banning Lithuanian language and education facilities as well as harshly suppressing the Roman Catholic religion. Destruction of Lithuanian social and political institutions and cultural hegemony imposed by Russia resulted in the rise of strong anti-Russian sentiments, intimidation in society and eventually increased efforts of the population to gain autonomy. Substantial progress in the organization of the resistance occurred in December 1905, when a revolution calling for the creation of self-government *within* the Russian Empire took place; however, this did not prove successful. It took more than a decade for the Lithuanian statehood to be restored in 1918 in the aftermath of the First World War.

From 1915, Lithuania was occupied by the German army. On February 16, 1918 the Lithuanian Council declared its independence and in November formed the first government of independent Lithuania, headed by Augustinas Voldemaros. A month later, worker and

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[42] BIDELEUX, R. *A History of Eastern Europe: Crisis and Change*. Routledge. 1998. p. 122

peasants' government was established and Soviet troops occupied Lithuania. After the Polish-Soviet war in August 1919 the Soviet troops left Lithuania and parliamentary elections took place. A year later, a Soviet-Lithuanian Peace Treaty was signed. On the basis of this treaty, Soviet Russia recognized Lithuania's sovereignty and denounced any future territorial claims. The period of independence of Lithuania was short-lived, though. USSR and Germany[43] continued their efforts to get hold of the Baltic republics, which were of strategic interest for both superpowers. Further development of Lithuania's fate was significantly marked by the signing of the Soviet-German non-aggression pact of 1939, known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact.

2.2.1   Soviet "betrayal"?

According to a secret protocol,[44] Lithuania was assigned under the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union. In exchange for the city of Vilnius, around 20,000 Soviet troops in were allowed in and deployed to effectively occupy the territory of Lithuania.[45] On June 17, 1940 the "people's government" was established and on July 27, 1940 the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic was declared. Soviet Lithuania was attached to the USSR on August, 6th. Throughout the period of years of 1940-1941 which are also referred to as the "first Soviet occupation"[46] at least 17,495 of Lithuanian residents were deported to Siberia (out of which

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[43] In 1938 Munich Agreement and the disintegration of Czechoslovakia took place. (known as "Western betrayal")

[44] Sovadina, Jiří. "Tzv. Pakt Molotov - Ribbentrop (23.8. 1939)." Moderní-Dějiny.cz. <http://www.moderni-dejiny.cz/clanek/tzv-pakt-molotov-ribbentrop-23-8-1939/> (Accessed 5/13/2014)

[45] "Lithuania: History." GlobalEDGE. Michigan State University. <http://globaledge.msu.edu/countries/lithuania/history> (Accessed 5/13/2014)

[46] RESENDE, E., BUDRYTE, D. Memory and Trauma in International Relations: Theories, Cases and Debates. Routledge. 2013

were 5,124 children) and 30,000 people had to face political terror and persecution.[47] These numbers become more striking when one looks at the size of the Lithuanian population of the time – according to the census conducted during the first republic in 1923, the total population was 2,028, 971.[48] As some authors argue, the political repressions and deportations that happened during the Soviet occupation are still present in the meta-narrative of Lithuanian history[49] and have strong implications for current Lithuania-Russia relations.

After Germany attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941, Soviet troops withdrew from the territory of Lithuania. After a brief period of independence that lasted about a month, Lithuania became occupied by Nazi troops and an anti-Soviet/anti-Semitic government was installed. During the occupation from 1941 to 1945, around 370,000 inhabitants were murdered, most of which were Jews. In the summer of 1944, Lithuania was "won back" by the Red army and the Soviets re-occupied the country. The armed resistance of anti-Soviet partisans that followed during the years 1944-1953 took a toll, leaving more than 20,000 dead. The "second Soviet occupation" also resulted in the deportations of around 130,000 people to gulags or exile.[50]

2.2.2 Lithuanian Struggle for Independence

According to Abdelal, Lithuanian interwar statehood carries important meaning for the Lithuanian nationalist movement and politics of perestroika of the eighties. Its significance, however, does not dwell in personal experiences and memories of the older Lithuanian

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[47] ANUŠAUSKAS, A. Teroras 1940-1958 m. Vilnius: Versus aureus. 2012.

[48] EIDINATS, A. et al. Lithuania in European Politics: The Years of the First Republic, 1918-1940. Palgrave Macmillan. 1999. p. 45

[49] RESENDE, E., BUDRYTE, D., 2013.

[50] BRESNEVIČIUTE-NOSÁLOVÁ, H. Stručná historie státu: Litva. Libri. 2006. p. 152.

generation, but is rather a "constructed, historical memory, shared among many Lithuanians".[51]

The Lithuanian interwar state was a hallmark of Lithuanian independent existence, however brief and insignificant it may have been. It was also the source of shared national identity founded on the opposition to Soviet Russia which effectively deprived the Lithuanians of their autonomy and individuality by creating 'New Soviet Men'. The creation of independent Lithuania was not, however, a result of nationally conscious elites rowing for a separate state. As Suny points out, within the tsarist empire, Lithuanian population was "almost completely peasant" and the "nationalist sentiments did not reach much beyond the relatively insignificant intelligentsia". The Church, which played a big role in the contemporary Lithuanian society, "encouraged ties to Poland and antagonisms to Russia" rather than supporting a separate Lithuanian identity.[52] Abdelal concludes that, "the establishment of an independent Lithuanian state resulted from German eastern diplomacy, the weakness of the Russian state, and British policies in the Baltic region".[53]

Soviet occupation lasted until 1990, when Lithuania was among the first states of the USSR to proclaim independence. On March, 11, an *Act on the Re-establishment of the State of Lithuania* was adopted. The first democratic elections that took place that year were won by the movement *Sajudis*[54] founded in 1988 which sought to depose the Communists from power and its chairman, Vytautas Landsbergis became the first President of Lithuania.

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[51]ABDELAL, RAWI. National Purpose in the World Economy: Post-Soviet States in Comparative Perspective. Cornell University Press. 2001. p. 87

[52] SUNY, R. G. The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution and Collapse of the Soviet Union. Stanford: Stanford University. 1993. p. 35-36

[53] ABDELAL, R. 2001, p. 88

[54] Among its 35 members, 17 were reformists from the Communist Party.

The declaration of independence resulted in retaliation from the side of authorities of Moscow, and Lithuania had to cope with an economic blockade imposed by the Soviet Union which believed that this would bring the newly established government down. Negotiations and offers of concessions did not lead to a peaceful solution[55] and in January, 1991, the Soviet troops launched a military operation in the capital of Vilnius, intending to occupy governmental offices and communication centers. The Soviet crackdown ended in bloodshed leaving 14 people dead as they tried to protect the buildings of Lithuanian television and radio. This violent assault is considered a "major escalation in the Soviet Government's use of force against the republic"[56] and much of the responsibility for sending Soviet tanks to the country is assigned to Mikhail Gorbachev;[57] this has, however, never been thoroughly investigated. The attacks were condemned by the international community and Lithuania organized its own referendum on independence in February, 1991, where more than 90% of the voters said "yes" to democracy and separation from the Soviet Union. Boris Yeltsin, newly elected president of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic recognized the independence of the Baltic States and Lithuania finally gained full control of its territory and borders.

2.2.3 Pro-European Course: "Bittersweet"?

In 1992, the Lithuanian parliament (Seimas) adopted *the Constitutional Act on Nonalignment of the Republic of Lithuania to Post-Soviet Eastern Unions* which proclaims

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[55] Esther, Fein. E. "Lithuanians Offer New Compromises to Avoid Blockade". The New York Times. 16. Apr. 1990. http://www.nytimes.com/1990/04/17/world/evolution-in-europe-lithuanians-offer-new-compromises-to-avoid-blockade.html (Accessed 5/15/2014)

[56] "1991: Bloodshed at Lithuanian TV Station." BBC News. 13 Jan. 1991. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/january/13/newsid_4059000/4059959.stm> (Accessed 5/14/2014)

[57] LANE, T. Lithuania: Stepping Westwards. New York: Routledge. 2001. P. 124

that although Lithuania will seek to "develop mutually advantageous relations with each state which was formerly a component of the USSR", it will "never join in any form any new political, military, economic or other unions or commonwealths of states formed on the basis of the former USSR". Lithuania also binds itself not to allow any "military bases or army units of Russia, the Commonwealth of Independent States or its constituent states" on its territory.[58] This precaution measure of the Seimas shifted Lithuania's strategic goals towards the West. Integration into the European as well as Transatlantic structures became the most important objective of this small Baltic country. Any possibility of re-integration into the post-Soviet space was deliberately swiped off the table.

The pro-European course was taken on at a cost, however. Economic transition from a centrally planned, Soviet-style economy was marked by rising prices of energy and exports of raw materials from Russia. Lithuania was "punished'" by its former big brother for not joining in the Commonwealth of Independent States, which enjoyed favorable energy prices, and was instead charged the "world price" as well as missing out on Russian subsidies and advantageous trade agreements offered to "reintegrationist states" such as Belarus, for example.[59] This cost of orientation to the West and turning back on Russia meant that Lithuania's economy was in rather bad shape during the first years of transition. However, in the eyes of Lithuanian public as well as the political elites, "autonomy from Russia and the country's return to Europe were worth some short-term economic pain."[60] "Rebirth" of Lithuania as a sovereign actor in the international arena meant convincing the international community of its perseverance and significance.

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[58] Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania. *Constitutional Act on Nonalignment of the Republic of Lithuania to Post-Soviet Eastern Alliances*. No. I/2622. June, 8, 1992

[59] ABDELAL, RAWI, 2001. p. 86

[60] Ibid.

Lithuanian construction of 'self' consisted of demonstrating that is not inferior to the sense of 'Europeanness' projected among the Western nations. Despite the prevailing stereotype of the Easterners as being uncivilized or even barbaric, Lithuanians were capable of being tamed and what is more, also becoming "good European citizens". Thus, Lithuania did not represent a kind of "otherness" that would strip it of its chance to become worthy of international recognition.

2.2.4 *Economic-material Relations of Lithuania with Russia*

Despite Lithuanian Euro-Atlantic political orientation, the economic interdependencies create conditions that urge it to sustain strong ties with Russia. Russian economic leverage on Lithuania rests on the major Russian capital that drives the Lithuanian economy, and the fact that Russia remains the principal energy source supplier for the whole of the Baltics. To Russia, Lithuania is also important as a transit country with good infrastructure along with the port in Klaipeda, which serves for transportation of Russian goods to Western Europe and energy supplies to Kaliningrad, an exclave of Russia bordering Lithuania, Poland, and the Baltic Sea.

Bohle and Greskovits argue that as regards the form and speed of transnational integration, Lithuania initially had "limited access to Western capital" and "most protracted reliance on domestic sources and continuing trade relationships with Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union."[61] Trade with Russia contributes to around one third of Lithuania's overall foreign imports, which is the highest portion when compared to other Baltic countries. This legacy continues to show its grip on both economy and politics of Lithuania to this day. Lithuanian dependency on Russian natural gas accounts for 100%. Russian companies have so far also played a "decisive role" in the country's economy, which was achieved through the

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[61]BOHLE, D., GRESKOVITS, B. *Capitalist Diversity on Europe's Periphery*. New York: Cornell University Press. 2012., p. 97

privatization of "strategic objects" and creation of joint ventures in the energy sectors.[62] Through this kind of economic penetration, Russia ensures its access to the EU markets as well as its "counterweight against Western capital" in the Baltic.[63]

Both Lithuania and Slovakia have strong economic-material ties to Russia. As regards this significant leverage, one would expect that a small country like Lithuania would be less hawkish in its approach towards Russia, also when it comes to international issues. The Baltic States are often referred to as "energy islands"[64], lacking energy systems connected to the other EU countries. This massive vulnerability separates them from the rest of the EU members. In this context, an antagonistic position against Russia presents a risk. Slovakia, in contrast, constructs its position towards Russia especially on this notion of economic vulnerability, building on the 'friendly' relationship it had with Russia over past two decades. The Crimean Crisis creates an environment in which national narratives are exposed to 'storytelling' and 'framing' and the empirical chapters that follow present how the 'political reality' surrounding Crimea is 'socially constructed' through various discursive means.

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[62]ŠLEIVYTE, J. *Russia's European Agenda and the Baltic States*. New York: Routledge. 2010. p. 171-172

[63]ŠLEIVYTE, J., 2010. p. 172

[64] GRIGAS, A. *"Energy Policy: The Achilles Heel of the Baltic States"*. In: Grigas, A., Kasekamp, A., Maslauskaite, K.: The Baltic states in the EU: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow. Notre Europe – Jacques Delors Institute. 2013

3   Case Study: Slovakia

To strengthen the relationship with interested partner countries in deepening political as well as economic cooperation and provide conditions for association with the EU, in 2009, the Eastern Partnership[65] was launched. This initiative has been declared one of Slovakia's foreign policy priorities and it remained so over the following years despite the change of government in 2010. Slovakia actively participated in the preparations of the Eastern Partnership project and was "one of the spiritual fathers of the initiative as long ago as the period when it was being formed within the V4"[66].

With the purpose of taking another step in the process, the Lithuanian capital Vilnius, hosted a summit in November, 2013, which was "expected to mark progress in political association and economic integration with Eastern Partnership countries by finalizing association agreements"[67]. The summit was deemed a failure as Ukraine's President Viktor Yanukovitch refused to sign the Association Agreement between the European Union and Ukraine and leaned towards Russia instead. In Ukraine, the events were followed by violence and demonstrations.

3.1   Slovakia: a Foreign Policy "Hermaphrodite"?

In reaction to the events of November, 2013 and raging Ukrainian protests at Maidan in Kiev, the Prime Minister Robert Fico stated that he was sorry the pact was not signed. However, as he saw it, membership in the EU was "not prescribed by religion", and thus,

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[65] The EaP is aimed at six countries of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. For more see: "What Is the EaP?" *EaPCommunity*. <http://www.easternpartnership.org/content/eastern-partnership-glance> (Accessed 5/20/2014)

[66] The Annual Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2009. <https://www.mzv.sk/en/ministry/publications-annual_report> p. 40. (Accessed 5/17/2014)

[67] Programme of the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. 2013. <http://static.eu2013.lt/uploads/documents/Presidency_programme_EN.pdf> (Accessed 5/9/2014)

every country could voluntarily decide whether to enter it or not. Fico also said that the EU was so "in love with itself" that it was convinced there is "nothing better in the world". He refused to comment on the decision of the Ukrainian government further and noted that: "Ukraine has just decided to go another route and I will not evaluate it now, it is a national issue".[68]

After returning to the office following the victory in parliamentary elections of 2012, Fico proclaimed that he wanted to "restore the friendly relations with Russia" and foster the "mutually beneficial business relationship". He said he wished to build on the rational and friendly dialogue that his government sought in the first term of 2006-2010 when he was in office until a centre-right coalition formed a new leadership[69] that caused relations with Russia to "cool down significantly" for "ideological reasons".[70] On the other hand, Fico has been building his image of a "pro-European" politician and was referred to as such also by the international media.[71] On the eve of his electoral victory in 2012, he said that "The European

[68] "Fico: EÚ Je Do Seba Taká Zamilovaná, že Nič Iné Neexistuje." (Fico: The EU is so in Love with Itself that Nothing Else Exists.) Pravda, 3 Dec. 2013. <http://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/301320-fico-eu-je-do-seba-tak-zamilovana-ze-nic-ine-neexistuje/> (Accessed 5/17/2014).

[69] In 2006-2010 Smer was part of the ruling coalition with the Movement for Democratic Slovakia and Slovak National Party. The government coalition invoked controversy as the leader of the National Party was known for his anti-Roma and anti-Hungrian remarks. In parliamentary elections 2010, Smer won the most seats, however, a centre-right coalition of four parties to contest the PM Fico was formed. In 2012, the new government fell down following a vote of no confidence that was tied to the vote on the extension of the European Financial Stability Fund.

[70] "Fico: Vláda Chce Obnoviť Priateľské Vzťahy S Ruskom." (Fico: The Government Wants to Restore the Friendly Relations with Russia) Aktuality.sk, 12 Apr. 2012. <http://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/204680/fico-vlada-chce-obnovit-priatelske-vztahy-s-ruskom/> (Accessed 5/17/2014)

[71] "Slovak President Appoints Premier Fico's 'Pro-European' Cabinet." Bloomberg, 4 Apr. 2012. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-04-04/slovak-president-appoints-premier-fico-s-pro-european-cabinet.html> (Accessed 5/17/2014)

"Pro-European Left Sweeps Slovak Vote, Targets Rich." Reuters, 11 Jan. 2012. http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/03/11/us-slovakia-election-idUSBRE82A08920120311 (Accessed 5/17/2014)

Union can lean on Smer[72] because we realize that Slovakia, as a small country living in Europe and wanting to live in Europe (...) desires to maintain the euro zone and the euro as a strong European currency".[73] The government's effort to maintain the pro-Europe-oriented image could be and indeed has been questioned in the light of the Russian annexation of Crimea in the spring of 2014. The opposition and local media accused Fico of not reacting promptly to the events happening just beyond the country's borders with its Eastern neighbor. Much of the critique targeted the Prime Minister's stand-offish attitude and ambiguous declarations in response to the conflict in Crimea. These were interpreted as being affected by Fico's pro-Russian sentiments. One of the Slovak political commentators gave Fico the title of a "geo-political hermaphrodite", for favoring the Russians while having common "household" with the European Union.[74]

The public declarations made by Prime Minister Fico in the beginning of March demonstrate how the theme of 'Russian invasion' was downplayed. The Prime Minister stressed coordination of action with international partners, while avoiding to alienate Russia.[75] When the crisis on the Crimean peninsula broke out, Fico gave a statement on behalf of the Slovak government on March, 2. He said that despite the fact that Slovakia has experienced invasion of the Soviet troops in 1968 when part of Czechoslovakia, for which the Slovak citizens can understand the feelings of the Ukrainian people better than anyone else, "In Slovakia, we do not want to make gestures just for the sake of gestures themselves, nor do we want to 'rattle' with metal plates. The Government will coordinate its position on the situation

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[72] Smer was the winning party in the 2012 elections headed by Fico. Fico founded the social-democratic party in 2002.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Schutz, Peter. "Geopolitický Hermafrodit." (Geopolitical Hermaphrodite) SME. 11 Mar. 2014. <http://komentare.sme.sk/c/7132101/geopoliticky-hermafrodit.html> (5/21/2014)

[75] In March, there was an ongoing presidential campaign in Slovakia. Fico was a prospective presidential candidate, but in the second round of elections lost to Andrej Kiska.

in Ukraine with our partners in the European Union and NATO". He underlined that any use of military force or invasion does not have a place in the modern world and he was convinced that the crisis should be settled through diplomatic and political means.

According to Fico, there were countries that presented a much more radical stance to the crisis. Slovakia, however, wanted to be "down-to-earth" and "rational" in these matters and the government would therefore not agree to the use of NATO troops as suggested by some of the member countries, placing Slovakia among the "Friendly Pragmatists' in relation to Russia. Fico highlighted that Slovakia was particularly concerned with its "national-state interest", with reference to the monitoring of potential inflows of migrants and energy security, which is an especially burning issue.[76] After the meeting of the Security Council the next day, Fico stated: "We have always argued and will argue that, if, on a territory of a sovereign state, there are activities of another state's army without the mandate of a competent international organization; it is a violation of international law."[77] The Foreign Minister who had just returned from Brussels, the 'European capital' was more specific, saying that, "There is no doubt that from the side of the Russian Federation, aggression and violation of international law occurred."[78]

In their initial responses, political elites in Slovakia showed restraint when it came to clearly stating country's position and in their rhetoric, they mainly addressed international partners upon which they rely on in terms of coordination and competence. As far as Slovakia

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[76] "R. FICO: Použitie Vojenskej Sily či Invázie Nemá v Modernom Svete Miesto." (R. FICO: The Use of Military Force or Invasion has no Place in the Modern World) Press Releases and Announcements. Government Office of the Slovak Republic. 2 Mar. 2014. <http://www.vlada.gov.sk/r-fico-pouzitie-vojenskej-sily-ci-invazie-nema-v-modernom-svete-miesto/> (Accessed 5/18/2014)

[77] "Situácia Na Ukrajine Musí Byť Riešená S Chladnou Hlavou a v Súlade S Medzinárodným Právom." (The Siutiation in Ukraine Needs to be Addressed Calmly and in Line with International Law) *Press Releases and Announcements*. Government Office of the Slovak Republic. 3 Mar. 2014. <http://www.vlada.gov.sk/situacia-na-ukrajine-musi-byt-riesena-s-chladnou-hlavou-a-v-sulade-s-medzinarodnym-pravom/> (Accessed 5/20/2014)

[78] "Mimoriadne Rokovanie Bezpečnostnej Rady SR O Ukrajine." (Special Meeting of the Security Council of the SR on Ukraine) Press Releases and Announcements. Government Office of the Slovak Republic, 3 Mar. 2014. <http://www.vlada.gov.sk/mimoriadne-rokovanie-bezpecnostnej-rady-sr-o-ukrajine/> (Accessed 5/20/2014)

was concerned, the Prime Minister primarily emphasized national interest, pragmatism and prudence. Implicitly, the government's statements suggest that someone has to take action; however, it is clear that Slovakia is not going to take the lead.

3.2 "Selective Memory"

Unlike in the case of Slovak policy makers, historical wrong-doings were brought to the light again in the neighboring Czech Republic. Czech President Miloš Zeman called back to remembrance the events of Prague Spring of 1968 when the Soviet troops came to occupy what was then former Czechoslovakia.[79] The head of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Czech parliament, Karel Schwarzenberg, compared the events in Ukraine to the Anschluss of Austria, building on the argument that Putin uses the same rhetoric of minority protection as Hitler in the 1930's.[80] The negative experience with Russian intervention resonates strongly in the speeches of Czech representatives, while the Slovak national elites deliberately neglected the topic not to threaten the relations with the Russian Federation. The ambiguous and rather slow response of the Slovak Prime Minister provoked reactions of distinguished foreign policy analysts and experts in Slovakia[81] who issued a joint statement condemning the practices of Russia with regard to what had happened in Crimea. According to the statement, the analysts regretted the official position of Slovakia had so far "lagged behind" its neighbors in the region in both speed and clarity and they believed that "Slovakia should express solidarity with Ukraine clearly and without delay, in close coordination with (its) closest allies

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[79] "Zemanovi Krym Připomíná Rok 1968, Schwarzenbergovi Hitlera v Roce 1938." (Crimea Reminds Zeman of 1968, to Schwarzenberg it Reminds of Hitler in 1938) IDNES.cz. 1 Mar. 2014. <http://zpravy.idnes.cz/zemanova-reakce-na-krym-0v4-/domaci.aspx?c=A140301_175537_domaci_wlk> (Accessed 5/15/14)

[80] "Politici Srovnávají: Putin Jako Hitler, Krym Jako Rok 1938." (Politicians Compare: Putin as Hitler, Crimea as 1938) ČT24. 4 Mar. 2014. <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct24/domaci/265086-politici-srovnavaji-putin-jako-hitler-krym-jako-rok-1938/> (Accessed 5/15/14)

[81] The statement was signed by Jozef Bátora, Vladimír Bilčík, Martin Bútora, Alexander Duleba, Balázs Jarábik, Milan Ježovica, Marian Majer, Juraj Marušiak, Milan Nič, Jaroslav Naď, Róbert Ondrejcsák, Milan Šuplata, Peter Terem and Róbert Vass.

and partners". In contrast to the governmental position, their statement did not downplay the significance of the Soviet invasion of 1968 which led to decades of occupation and "normalization". According to Slovak foreign policy experts, it is this very experience why Slovakia "must not turn a blind eye to Russia's impermissible conduct."[82]

On the side of the non-governmental actors, an apparent counter-discourse emerged. This discourse emphasized Slovakia's international commitments to solidarity on the one hand; on the other hand it stressed the frustrating historical experience with occupation by Moscow that was obscurely dismissed by the politicians in power.

3.3   Slovakia vs. Regional Allies

Interestingly enough, in the joint statement of the whole Visegrád group, the common voice took a resolute stance. In the document it says that, "The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia are appalled to witness a military intervention in 21st century Europe akin to their own experiences in 1956, 1968 and 1981" and call on Russia to respect its international commitments and legal obligations, including the Budapest Memorandum".[83]

Another joint statement that was concluded and issued by the Nordic-Baltic (NB8)[84] and Visegrad countries (V4)[85] at their meeting in Narva, Estonia[86], explicitly describes the

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[82] "Výzva Analytikov: Slovensko by Malo Jasne Povedať, že Postup Ruska Je Neprijateľný." (Analysts' Call: Slovakia Should Clearly Say that Russia's Actions are Unacceptable) SME, 3 Mar. 2014. <http://www.sme.sk/c/7122360/vyzva-analytikov-slovensko-by-malo-jasne-povedat-ze-postup-ruska-je-neprijatelny.html> (Accessed 5/18/2014)

[83] Statement of the Prime Ministers of the Visegrád Countries on Ukraine. Prime Minister's Office. 4 Mar. 2014. http://www.kormany.hu/en/prime-minister-s-office/news/statement-of-the-prime-ministers-of-the-visegrad-countries-on-ukraine (Accessed 5/20/2014)

[84] Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

[85] Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia

[86] The meeting took place on the 6-7 March, 2014, succeeding the initiative of Poland and Sweden who proposed deepening of the cooperation of the states.

invasion of the Crimean peninsula as an act of "aggression", despite the fact that energy dependence on Russia is a common denominator for majority of the attending countries (excluding Scandinavia). Further, the NB8 together with the V4 Ministers condemned the "unprovoked violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by the Russian Federation" demanding that it withdraw its armed forces from Ukraine immediately. Referendum in Crimea on the accession to Russia was deemed "illegal" and "unacceptable" as it violates the constitution of Ukraine.[87]

The presence of the Baltic countries that previously quite visibly demonstrated their dislike of Russia's policies, as well as the influence of Poland in the V4 group can be strongly felt when analyzing the statement. The common theme frames the annexation of Crimea as "threatening", violating international norms and order. The inconsistency in the domestic and international position of Slovakia in relation to Crimea shows more visible.

3.4   Question of security

During March and April, 2014, the Council of the European Union implemented two stages of sanctions against Russia.[88] Slovak Foreign Minister, Miroslav Lajčák, commented that in the next level, the sanctions will be economic, and "we are doing everything possible to avoid this". He said, however, that if the EU agrees on further sanctions for Russia, Slovakia will support the decision.[89]

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[87] Joint Declaration of the Foreign Ministers of the V4 and NB8 on the situation in Ukraine. Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. 7 Mar. 2014.
https://www.mzv.sk/App/wcm/media.nsf/vw_ByID/ID_2D95DEBCFF2CA4FEC1257C9400435F8C_SK/$File/NB8%20VN4%20statement%20Narva%20FINAL.pdf (Accessed 5/20/2014)

[88] "Russian Officials Targeted by Sanctions." *BBC News*. N.p., 29 Apr. 2014. 25 May 2014.
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26672800> (Accessed 5/20/2014)

[89] "Lajčák: Ak Sa Únia Dohodne Na Sankciách Voči Rusku, Podporíme Ich." (Lajčák: If the Union Decides on the Sanctions against Russia, We Will Support Them) SME. 23 Apr. 2014.
<http://www.sme.sk/c/7179613/lajcak-ak-sa-unia-dohodne-na-sankciach-voci-rusku-podporime-ich.html> (Accessed 5/20/2014)

Economic sanctions against Russia would have severe impact on the country, including its business partners. This would indeed be the case with Slovakia. According to the Minister of Economy, Tomáš Malatinský, "If the sanctions are returned on the side of Russia, they will affect not only the infrastructure of oil and gas supply, but many businesses would have problems. We conducted analyses; many companies have active contacts with Russia that would be at risk". Another official pointed out the great impact of the sanctions on the automotive industry and tourism.[90] In 2012, automotive industry, as the crucial branch of Slovak economy accounted for 6 percent of total GDP.[91] A large portion of the car industry products are exported to Russia, specifically. In this regard, Again, Fico played the 'Friendly Pragmatist' card again. Prime Minister warned that if "a geopolitical fight prevails over common sense" and Slovakia is pressured to take part in applying tough economic sanctions against Russia, it can "forget about economic success". According to preliminary analyses, economic sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation would stall economic growth and their effect on Slovak economy would be "brutal".[92]Authenticity of this statement is relatively irrelevant, but what matters here is how the problem of sanctions was narrated. Fico dramatized the issue and framed it as a threat to national interest.

Slovak leaders continuously emphasize an economic concern which is reflected in their demonstrated reluctance towards more strict sanctions against Russia. As Slovakia is part of the EU strategy, it has to follow the common stance. On the other hand, neither France

[90] "Na Plynovú Krízu Sme Už Pripravení Lepšie, Tvrdí Malatinský." (We Are Now Better Prepared for a Gas Crisis, Claims Malatinský) Webnoviny.sk. SITA, 13 Apr. 2014.
<http://www.webnoviny.sk/slovensko/clanok/812251-na-plynovu-krizu-sme-uz-pripraveni-lepsie-tvrdi-malatinsky/> (Accessed 5/20/2014)

[91] "Automobilový Priemysel Sa Vlani Podieľal Na Tvorbe Slovenského HDP 6 %." (Last Year, the Automotive Industry Accounted For 6% of Slovak GDP) TERAZ.sk. TASR, 4 Oct. 2013.
<http://www.teraz.sk/ekonomika/automobilovy-priemysel-aumobily/60260-clanok.html> (Accessed 5/20/2014)

[92] "Pre Slovensko by Ekonomické Sankcie Voči Rusku Boli „brutálne"" (For Slovakia, Economic Sanctions Against Russia Would be 'Brutal') EurActiv.sk, 30 Apr. 2014. <http://www.euractiv.sk/obrana-a-bezpecnost/clanok/pre-slovensko-by-ekonomicke-sankcie-voci-rusku-boli-brutalne-022355> (Accessed 5/18/2014)

nor Germany is ready to endorse economic sanctions against Russia just yet. In Germany, bilateral trade with the Russian Federation and Germany is high and Germany is the biggest exporter to Russia among the EU member states.

During the Global Security Forum (GLOBSEC) organized in Bratislava in mid-May 2014, Fico again underlined the crucial role of energy security for the countries of Europe: "After the gas crisis, the V4 countries made a number of concrete steps to strengthen their energy security. Together with partners in the region, we are working to improve the interconnection of energy networks." This refers to the optional reverse flow between Slovakia and the Czech Republic and Austria or the north-south link from Poland through Slovakia and Hungary. Nevertheless, the possible closure of gas supply from Russia through Ukraine would require "crisis management", added Prime Minister.[93] In his speech, Fico brought up the Russia-Ukraine gas dispute of 2009 which fully revealed the unreliability of Russia as a supplier and of Ukraine as the transit country for the gas deliveries.[94] The experience that caused an almost two-week interruption of gas supplies from Russia through Ukraine was stressed in order to make the argument about energy security stronger and pressing. Ukraine, though indirectly, was presented in a negative picture to justify the governmental position on Russia.

Another issue that was raised again due to the Crimean crisis was Slovak defense. On behalf of Slovakia, Fico emphasized the government does not plan to increase the military

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[93] "V4: Na Prípadnú Plynovú Krízu Sme Dnes Lepšie Pripravení." (V4: In the Case of a Gas Crisis, We Are Now Better Prepared) Press Releases and Announcements. Government Office of the Slovak Republic, 15 May 2014. <http://www.vlada.gov.sk/v4-na-pripadnu-plynovu-krizu-sme-dnes-lepsie-pripraveni/> (Accessed 5/20/2014)

[94] Russian supply of gas accounts for 83% of the total supply of Slovakia.

expenditures.[95] Secretary General of NATO, Anders Fogh Rasmussen who visited GLOBSEC highlighted that "The illegal Russian military actions in Ukraine have created a completely new security situation in Europe." Taking this into account, "European Allies must invest more in defense. It's rather clear, and (…) the Ukraine crisis has demonstrated it, that insecurity is much more expensive."[96] The current Slovak expenditures on defense represent only one percent of GDP. To address Rasmussen's remark, Fico argued that Slovakia has only recently undergone a demanding consolidation of public finances and its situation is more difficult than that of other NATO countries. "The question of increasing the military budget in Slovakia is very sensitive," said Fico.[97]

3.5 Aiming Towards Russia?

On May, 19, Slovak Foreign Minister Lajčák travelled to Moscow in person to meet his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov and the Deputy Prime Minister, Dmitry Rogozin. Rogozin is on the list of the EU and the US as an undesirable person for publicly calling for the annexation of Crimea.[98] In their statement, the Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs explained that Minister Lajčák had visited Ukraine several times, and now he was visiting Russia. Lajčák himself commented that, "It is as if we helped to bridge the two worlds in which we live in. We are working with one set of information, and Russia is in contact with

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[95] "Viac Peňazí Na Armádu Nedáme, Prekvapil Fico Na Globsecu." (We Won't Give More Money on Military, Fico Surprised the Globsec) SME, 15 May 2014. <http://www.sme.sk/c/7203155/viac-penazi-na-armadu-nedame-prekvapil-fico-na-globsecu.html> (Accessed 5/20/2014)

[96] "NATO - Monthly Press Conference by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen." NATO. 19 May 2014. <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_109980.htm> (Accessed 5/20/2014)

[97] "Premiér Robert Fico Sa Stretol S Generálnym Tajomníkom NATO." (Prime Minister Robert Fico Met the General Secretary of NATO) Press Releases and Announcements. Government Office of the Slovak Republic, 15 May 2014. <http://www.vlada.gov.sk/premier-robert-fico-sa-stretol-s-generalnym-tajomnikom-nato/> (Accessed 5/20/2014)

[98] Official Journal of the European Union. L 86/27. 21.3.2014. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2014:086:0027:0029:EN:PDF> (Accessed 5/21/2014)

the second one." The visit of the Foreign Minister in Moscow was endorsed by Fico: "I see the content of the negotiations between the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic and the Russian Federation and as confirmation of the policy of the Slovak government which, in the crisis situations, prefers dialogue and peaceful political solutions. The Slovak Republic is and wants to be a credible member of the EU and NATO. At the same time it has an interest in good relations with non-member countries of these organizations."

The actions of the Slovak government seem to be in line with the Foreign policy strategy for 2014 that declares that Slovakia "will contribute to the development of the strategic partnership between the EU and the Russian Federation" and "facilitate the implementation of a constructive dialogue between NATO and Russia." Slovakia's current government is trying to frame itself as a "mediator" between the "big players". However, the narrative boosted by the Prime Minister seems to be leaning more towards Russia in many respects, not really fostering a multilateral dialogue. The "friendly" and "pro-Russian" attitude on the one hand; and indifferent, slightly antagonizing take on Ukraine raises questions of what the actual policy of the Slovak Republic stands for. Ex-minister of Foreign Affairs, Mikuláš Dzurinda, criticized the conduct of the current minister as it created a damaging image of what looked like Slovakia distancing itself from the common position of the EU and NATO. Alexander Duleba, an analyst from the Slovak Foreign Policy Association added that, "We let ourselves to be dragged into in the information strategy of Russia which is trying to divide the EU and NATO countries into "the better" and "the worse".[99] International media regarded the actions on behalf of Slovakia as an "awkward balancing act", as it

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[99] "Lavrov Rokoval S Lajčákom: Cením Si, že Slovensko Je Naklonené Rusku." (Lavrov Negotiating With Lajčák: I appreciate that Slovakia is Inclined Towards Russia) SME, 19 May 2014. <http://www.sme.sk/c/7207507/lavrov-rokoval-s-lajcakom-cenim-si-ze-slovensko-je-naklonene-rusku.html> (Accessed 5/21/2014)

presented a certain amount of concern in line with the EU's position, while avoiding alienation from the important ally that Russia seems to be.[100]

Later in May, Prime Minister said that the current situation is a result of the failure of Ukraine to manage and organize their domestic affairs. When it comes to decisions with regard to Ukraine and stricter sanctions against Russia, Fico again stressed that first and foremost, he wants to promote national interests of Slovakia, because, "It would be bad if we would now sacrifice such important variables [economic growth] in favor of political combat, which, after all, Slovakia has nothing to do with."[101] Fico dissociated Slovakia from the conflict, this statement, however, does not mean that he did not choose to take sides.

Development of business relations with Russia is indeed among the priorities of the current government. However, the manner in which it tries to advocate the state interest is rather puzzling. In the aftermath of annexation of Crimea, The Prime Minister said that when it comes to Slovak response, it is up to the 'big countries' to negotiate and come to an agreement first. The President of the Republic, Ivan Gašparovič, added that Slovakia cannot afford to "go solo" on this issue and should wait for the results of the negotiations in Brussels that were to happen in the days to follow.[102] What creates the puzzle is that Slovak governing elites are bound by the common EU foreign policy strategy, but at the same time use private diplomatic channels to smoothen up relations with Moscow in order to present themselves as

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[100] "Slovakia Nurtures Special Ties to Russia, despite EU Sanctions." *Reuters*. 22 May 2014. http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/05/22/ukraine-crisis-slovakia-idUKL6N0O847Y20140522 (Accessed 5/28/2014)

[101] "Fico O Ukrajine: Za Väčšinu Problémov Si Môžu Sami, Nevedia Riadiť Krajinu." (Fico on Ukraine: For Most of the Problems They Are Responsible Themselves, They don't know How to Manage the Country) SME, 20 May 2014. <http://ekonomika.sme.sk/c/7209315/fico-o-ukrajine-za-vacsinu-problemov-si-mozu-sami-nevedia-riadit-krajinu.html> (Accessed 5/21/2014)

[102] "Rusi Podľa Fica Porušili Právo, Náš Veľvyslanec v Moskve Ostane." (According to Fico, the Russians Breached the Law, Our Ambassador Stays in Moscow) SME. 3 Mar. 2013 <http://www.sme.sk/c/7122652/rusi-podla-fica-porusili-pravo-nas-velvyslanec-v-moskve-ostane.html> (Accessed 5/18/2014)

"friendly partners". Fico repeatedly uses the words "national interest", "economic concerns", which he links to the future horrendous GDP outlook that would be generated by EU-imposed sanctions. At the same time, he tries to stress pro-EU orientation of Slovakia. The policy of trying to "sit on two chairs" however, may result in an unpleasant fall between.

On the domestic level, the Prime Minister's constant argumentation, uncontested by the officials of his government, aims at convincing the public that deeper involvement of Slovakia and its engagement in the sanction programme presents a threat to the national interest. This threat is framed as being mainly economic in nature, addressing the energy and business linkages Slovakia has with Russia. While Fico keeps emphasizing how counter-productive it is for Slovakia to openly oppose Russia, he does not propose alternative policy strategies other than complying with the EU/NATO plan of action. Externally, Slovakia seems to speak in one voice with its partners (such as the V4). Negotiations on the EU level entail a lot of diplomatic back-channeling, however. On the level of negotiations of the EU Council working groups, Slovakia took a rather careful stand and although sanctions were negotiated and eventually imposed, it was among the less "radical/vehement" states to pressure for more strict measures.[103]

Slovakia tends to ally with like-minded states such as the fellow members of the Visegrád group or the 'new' member states such as the Baltics.[104] The substantive incoherence in Slovakia's position might, however, threaten Slovakia's alliances in the region. Economic concerns dominate the discourse; national interest frequently used as an argument against stricter positioning towards Russia. The significance of historical experiences and negative connotations that resurface with them are downplayed by the

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[103] Interview with Permanent Representative #1 from COEST in Brussels. Conducted on: April, 29 & May, 2, 2014.

[104] Interview with Permanent Representative #2 from COEST in Brussels. Conducted on: April, 29 & May, 2, 2014.

government. In the narrative constructed by political elites, Slovakia alienates Ukraine rather than Russia; Russia is portrayed as a strategic, reliable partner that if kept 'untouched', guarantees prosperity. The salience of pro-Russian sentiments, however, seems to be limited in Slovak society as policy-makers have to face critiques and disconcerting reactions from the both media and non-governmental actors, in particular.

4 Case Study: Lithuania

Bilateral relations between Lithuania and Russia are "frequently put under severe tension by harsh, mostly rhetorical battles over the past."[105] The underlying identity conflict sometimes manifests itself in occasional trade blockades, gas price disputes and Russian military maneuvers in the Kaliningrad oblast. One of the common themes which have been prevalent in the discourse of the Baltic countries are the events of the Second World War, particularly the Soviet occupation of the 1940's still present in the minds of the people. In the two decades after Lithuania's independence and restoration of statehood, this appears to be a compelling argument notably after the Russian annexation of Crimea in March, 2014. The Lithuanian rhetoric towards Russia appeared rather hawkish in style. This has come especially from the side of the President of Lithuania, Dalia Grybauskaitė who, together with the state government, conducts Lithuanian foreign policy. At a special EU Summit, President Grybauskaitė told a BBC reporter that the situation reminded her very much of the 1940's occupation by the Red Army and actions of the Russian President are "very much behavior like in Stalin's times".[106] This comparison may seem harsh to some, but it unambiguously underscores the grievances of the Lithuanian nation suffered under the Soviet rule. It places Lithuania in opposition to the undemocratic, the oppressive, and the wrongful.

Indeed, in the Baltic States, the invasion by the Russian troops and annexation of Crimea has led European leaders to draw a lot of historical comparisons and images of old, but clearly not forgotten grievances. Marko Mikhelson, the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Estonian parliament pointed out quite straightforwardly a connection between the 1940 and 2014 situation, saying that, "If you look at what is happening today in

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[105] ONKEN, E-C. Commemorating 9 May: The Baltic States and European Memory Poltics. IN: Ehin, Piret, Berg, Eiki: Identity and Foreign Policy. Baltic-Russian Relations and European Integration. Ashgate. 2009. p. 46

[106] Urban, Mark. "Europe's Leaders Haunted by History." BBC News. 6. Mar. 2014. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-26469113> (Accessed 5/15/14)

Crimea, this is a very direct repetition of Stalinist policy in 1940".[107] When analyzing the international coverage of the reactions, Baltic States seem to put themselves in a much more distinct position than the other countries who had suffered from historical disputes with Russia. President Grybauskaitė drew attention to the immediate threat that Moscow poses to the security in the Baltic region: "First it's Ukraine, Moldova will be next and, finally, it can reach the Baltic states and Poland."[108]

4.1 "Milk War"

One example when the tensions between Russia and Lithuania manifested themselves preceding the Crimean crisis was just before the summit in Vilnius where the key EU association agreement with Ukraine was to be signed. Russia suspended Lithuanian dairy imports, claiming it was concerned over product quality and sanitary issues. The Vilnius summit held under the auspices of the Eastern Partnership initiative was perceived as going against Russian regional interests by Moscow and especially to its plan to establish a Eurasian union as an alternative to the EU.[109]

A spokesperson to the EU Health Commissioner expressed confidence in the Lithuanian food safety standards required by the EU on the one hand, on the other he refused to comment on political and trade implications of the dispute.[110] Meanwhile, Grybauskaitė, who stated that the nature of the decision to restrict Lithuanian exports to Russia was clearly

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[107] "Crimea Occupation Casts Shadow of 1940 over Baltic Nations - FT.com." Financial Times. 12 Mar. 2014. <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/9343f7d8-a97e-11e3-b87c-00144feab7de.html#axzz31lrERY5O> (Accessed 5/15/14)

[108] Ibid.

[109] In June 2010, Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia came into existence and it represents a first step towards the plan to create a full-fledged Eurasian Union by 2015.

[110] "Russia Takes Aim at Lithuania's Dairy Imports Ahead of Vilnius Summit." EurActiv. 17 Oct. 2013. <http://www.euractiv.com/europes-east/russia-takes-aim-lithuania-wake-news-530910> (Accessed 5/15/2014)

political[111], hosted the Danish prince during his visit to Vilnius with the "cheese banned in Russia" for breakfast. Moreover, "the selection of Lithuanian dairy products was also given as a gift to the prince's family and handed over to Danish Queen Margrethe II." In addition to the 'display' that took place in the Presidential Palace, the dairy products also reached the Members of the European Parliaments.[112] By these manifestations, the small Baltic State showed that despite its manoeuvres to hurt not only Lithuanian businesses, but also its reputation, Russia cannot take the government by surprise. Despite the strong asymmetric economic relationship between Lithuania and Russia and high economic losses this whole controversy caused, the suspension of dairy imports, which lasted about three months, did not severely damage the local market nor did it lead to the bankruptcy of dairy producers. Rather, the episode could be seen as prelude of the Vilnius summit and a Russian strategy to exert pressure on Lithuanian diplomacy.

4.2 'Othering' Russia

The outbreak of the Crimean crisis in March, 2014, was strongly condemned by Lithuanian political elites. Following the annexation of Crimean peninsula by Russia, Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs put together a list of eighteen Russian officials to whom it decided to ban entry to the country, including the deposed Ukrainian president Yanukovych. These were accused of "human right violations, violence against and brutal

[111]"Lithuanian President: Blockade of Lithuanian Dairy Products in Russia Is Political." 15min.lt. 16 Oct. 2013. <http://www.15min.lt/en/article/world/lithuanian-president-blockade-of-lithuanian-dairy-products-in-russia-is-political-529-377562?cf=vl> (Accessed 5/15/2014)

[112] "Lithuanian President Treats Danish Prince to Cheese Banned in Russia." 15min.lt. 10 Oct. 2013. <http://www.15min.lt/en/article/politics/lithuanian-president-treats-danish-prince-to-cheese-banned-in-russia-526-375956?cf=vl> (Accessed 5/15/2014)

treatment of peaceful protesters". Lithuania pursued sanctions against Ukraine, while the EU's drafting of the list was still "stalling".[113]

In response to Lithuanian support of Ukraine and 'punishing' Russia, the use of pressure through economic means occurred again as Russia suspended imports of some food products in March, through the Lithuanian port of Klaipeda. Another point of pressure involved the Kaliningrad Oblast, a Russian exclave on the shores of the Baltic Sea, also bordering Poland. Russian Baltic sea fleet is located in Kaliningrad and Russian military exercises and maneuvers at the beginning of March 2014 caused concern among Lithuanians. Despite the fact that the demonstrations of Russian military power resulted in an increased vigilance of Lithuanian authorities, the Ministry of Defense as well as international commentators deemed Russian action against Lithuania as a NATO member unlikely. Nevertheless, both Lithuania and Poland perceived the military maneuvers as a hostile act against countries that demonstrated support for Ukraine, adding to the discourse on 'othering' Russia.

The frames that Grybauskaitė used to depict Russia directed attention to viewing it as an 'unpredictable aggressor' which will strive to get what it wants at any cost. She underlined, however, that "No matter what the country is, what is the size of it, we have to know that we cannot make the historic mistake for the second time, i.e., we will have to show resistance and fire shots, if someone tries to occupy us".[114] By drawing historical comparisons to Lithuania's own experience with Russian occupation, Grybauskaitė made the statement more memorable and resonating. She also stressed the importance of NATO membership that helped the

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[113] "Lithuania Bans Entry for Yanukovych and 17 Other Former Ukrainian Government Officials." The Lithuania Tribune, 4 Mar. 2014. <http://en.delfi.lt/64654/lithuania-bans-entry-for-yanukovych-and-17-other-former-ukrainian-government-officials-201464654/> (Accessed 1/6/2014)

[114] "Grybauskaite: We'll Have to Fire Shots, If Someone Tries to Occupy Us." The Lithuania Tribune. The Lithuania Tribune, 11 Mar. 2014 <http://en.delfi.lt/65016/grybauskaite-well-have-to-fire-shots-if-someone-tries-to-occupy-us-201465016/> (Accessed 6/1/2014)

country to free itself from "the field of post-imperial ambitions" and provides guarantees for the Lithuania's security.

The discourse over Crimean crisis constructed primarily by President Grybauskaitė positioned Lithuania closer to the West, bluntly alienating Russia: "What is happening in Ukraine, especially in Crimea, has shown that the response, international instruments are too-civilized. I don't want in no way say [sic] that they should be different. But we are dealing with a different civilization or an attitude to civilization. If the West are in the 21st century, so I would attribute the behavior we see now to, at best, to the middle of the last century. The clash is very painful."[115] The narrative produced by the Lithuanian President is in line with the portrayal of Russia as Europe's "significant other", intensifying the salience of the discourse.

4.3   A New "Cold War"?

After signing the association agreement with Ukraine, Grybauskaitė said in an interview that "We are only in [sic] the beginning of a cold war… And this cold war we already saw in the form of quasi-military actions, today we're seeing elements of the beginning of an economic blockade for Ukraine and maybe for some other, even European countries… We also see an absolutely open propaganda and informational war already. Especially, we see it on our borders, in the Baltic States, it's already open." According to Grybauskaitė, "We are facing the largest security threats and challenges after Second World War" and "it's practically a prelude and a beginning of a 'New Cold War' if Russia will not stop." Lithuanian President positioned herself and her country again on the side of the 'West', creating a clear division between "us" and "them", 'othering' Russia. She drew attention to the urgency of the issue that already threatens the Baltics and is just a matter of time when it

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[115] Ibid.

hits them in full scale. She formulated the Russian-Ukrainian crisis as a prologue to a "New Cold War", adding a 'dramatizing effect' to the situation. Grybauskaitė straightforwardly identified Russia as the perpetrator, unlike, for example, the Slovak Prime Minister who addressed the breach of international law on rather general terms, avoiding alienating Russia explicitly.

Further in the interview, Grybauskaitė selected aspects of the experience with Russian occupation that qualify the Baltic States as 'Western advisors', stating that, "We, the Baltic States and Poland knowing and being under Russia for 50 years and being very close and already faced after declaration of independence a few times economic blockade…we are more confident, we know what we can expect and we know how to manage." Since the Western partners do not fully realize these consequences and how to deal with Russian president Putin, the Baltics "sometimes are as 'translators' of "what can be in their (Russian) minds". According to Grybauskaitė, Putin said publicly that the disappearance of the Soviet Union and especially the fact that the Baltic States "became the members of the Western world" was a "personal pain" and a "personal tragedy". How this will be used by him in future is "not clear". "If you will be weak [sic], you will be taken for nothing", Grybauskaitė declared with regard to the EU's call for de-escalation, which according to her should include "strong response, and "strong commitment".[116]

By re-telling the story, the President directly drew historical analogies between the annexation of Crimean and occupation of the Baltic States by Russian army in the 1940's, seeking for the recognition of the 'national narrative' strives for re-assertion; yet again accentuating its antagonisms towards Russia. The events surrounding Russian invasion are

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[116] "Warning of 'prelude to New Cold War'" BBC. 21 Mar. 2014. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26692589> (Accessed 5/31/2014)

still an essential ingredient in the national narrative of the Lithuanian 'self' and seem to "construct the past for the purposed of the present, if only by selective emphasis".[117]

The statements by Grybauskaitė also have to be viewed in the context of presidential elections that took place in May, 2014, however. She ran for re-election to the Office of President and according to some commentators, the rather anti-Russian rhetoric as well as brining in the NATO support raised the number of votes in her favor.[118] If this were true (although not easy to prove), it could serve as an argument in support of the salience of anti-Russian sentiments present in Lithuanian society.

In April, Lithuanian parliament adopted a resolution on the situation in Ukraine, calling for the withdrawal of the Russian troops from the Ukrainian territory. In the document, the MPs also pushed for the EU to address energy independence from Russia as top priority, since the energy blackmailing on the side of Russia hinders peaceful and just settlement of the conflict.[119] Interestingly, the Lithuanian Seimas also asked the EU to "guarantee an objective assessment of the damages incurred by Ukraine due to the unlawful actions of the Russian Federation." Lithuania seems to be pushing for justice with regard to the occupation and subsequent annexation of Crimea, which could be seen as a side-liner of advocacy on the level of Lithuanian-Russian relations. Lithuanian demands for compensation for the damages caused by the Soviet occupation of 1940 were raised immediately after the rebirth of the

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[117] EHIN, P., BERG, E. Incompatible Identities? Baltic-Russian Relations and the EU as an Arena for Identity Conflict. IN: Ehin, Piret, Berg, Eiki: Identity and Foreign Policy. Baltic-Russian Relations and European Integration. Ashgate. 2009. p. 10

[118] "LitovskáPrezidentkaVyhralaVoľbyaObhájilaFunkciu."SME, 26 May 2014. <http://www.sme.sk/c/7214967/litovska-prezidentka-vyhrala-volby-a-obhajila-funkciu.html> (Accessed 6/1/2014)

[119]"Seimas Resolution Demands Withdrawal of Russian Troops from Ukraine - The Lithuania Tribune." The Lithuania Tribune. 24 Apr. 2014. <http://en.delfi.lt/67139/seimas-resolution-demands-withdrawal-of-russian-troops-from-ukraine-201467139/> (Accessed, 5/15/14)

Lithuanian state in 1990 and continue to be on the current government's agenda[120], despite the fact that to today's Russia, these are "closed for good."[121] The different perspectives on the shared history present a recurring anxiety and a cause of distress on the side of Lithuania, while Russia already has other things on its large plate.

4.4   Identity over Economy

Following the conflict in Crimea and the Lithuanian pro-Ukrainian policy stance, concerns arose regarding the possible consequences for the Lithuanian economy. Lithuanian dependency on Russian gas accounts for 100% and the level of dependence intensified substantially after the Ignalina nuclear power plant was closed down as a consequence of the EU accession agreement. Trade with Russia contributes to around one third of Lithuania's overall foreign imports, which is the higher than the other Baltic countries.

Since 2012, Lithuania has a centre-left government which has sought a comprehensive and pragmatic dialogue with Russia, especially over energy security. There, however, is a prevailing issue of gas prices which are, according to Lithuanian politicians and analysts, the highest in Europe despite Lithuania's geographical proximity to Russia.[122] The reasons for this are deemed to be political. The Lithuanian support of Ukraine incited fears among the public and the media that it could affect the ongoing lawsuit against the Russian Gazprom involving gas prices. These were charged above the market level prices between years 2004 and 2012. Lithuanian Prime Minister, Algirdas Butkevičius said that "time will show"

[120] "Lithuania Continues to Seek Compensation from Russia for Damage Caused by Soviet Occupation." Baltic Review. 4 May 2013. <http://baltic-review.com/2013/05/lithuania-continues-to-seek-compensation-from-russia-for-damage-caused-by-soviet-occupation/>. (Accessed 5/19/2014)

[121] "Russian Ambassador: Soviet Occupation Compensation Issue Is Closed for Good." The Lithuania Tribune. 26 Apr. 2013. <http://www.lithuaniatribune.com/35507/russian-ambassador-the-issue-on-compensation-of-occupation-damages-closed-for-good-201335507/>. (Accessed 5/19/2014)

[122] "Europe Fears Its Dependency on Russian Natural Gas as U.S, EU Sanctions near." McClatchyDC. 16 Mar. 2014. <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2014/03/16/221391/europe-fears-its-dependency-on.html> (Accessed 5/8/2014)

whether these concerns would prove justified.[123] Gazprom proposed discounted gas prices to the Lithuanian government in exchange for the withdrawal of all ongoing lawsuits in Lithuanian courts and international arbitration tribunals, including the commitment for no future claims.

In the meantime, Lithuanian Energy Minister, Jaroslav Neverovič, appears to be seeking alternative gas suppliers to diversify the imports. The new deals depend on the Liquified Natural Gas (LNG) terminal that is currently under construction in Klaipeda (as of May, 2014) and should become the first in the Baltic region. Among the potential LNG suppliers are companies from the U.S., Norway and also Qatar. The minister said that, "How much we'll be buying from Gazprom will depend on the price for Russian gas."

Upon the meeting of finance ministers in Brussels in May, 2014, the Lithuanian Finance Minister, Rimantas Šadžius, stated that, "we have assessed the possible economic consequences of this turmoil between Russia and Ukraine for the Lithuanian economy. (…) of course, the impact could be there, but our assessment is that economically, it will be limited." Šadžius also expressed gratitude for the European structural funds assistance which is a "very important source of economic growth" for both Lithuania and other Eastern European countries, however, dismissing the intention to ask for "any special help" as a result of the Russian-Ukrainian crisis.[124] This statement is quite counter-intuitive in the sense that the economic interests are undoubtedly one of the top priorities of the Lithuanian government as the well-being of the country effectively insures functioning of all of the state institutions and social systems. On the other hand, government's assurance claiming that "everything is under

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[123] "Time Will Show Whether Lithuania's Position on Ukraine Will Affect Gazprom Talks." 15min.lt. 6 Mar. 2014. <http://www.15min.lt/en/article/in-lithuania/time-will-show-whether-lithuania-s-position-on-ukraine-will-affect-gazprom-talks-525-410246?cf=vl> (Accessed 5/15/2014)

[124] "Russian-Ukrainian Conflict to Have Limited Impact on Lithuanian Economy". The Lithuania Tribune. 6 May 2014. <http://en.delfi.lt/67656/russian-ukrainian-conflict-to-have-limited-impact-on-lithuanian-economy-201467656/>. (Accessed 5/15/14)

control" helps to frame the problem a bit differently. In comparison with Slovakia, one can see a selective approach to what themes dominate the discourse in both countries. While the Slovak policy-makers stress the threats posed to economy by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict; in Lithuania these economic concerns are acknowledged, but downplayed as the main focus is on antagonistic narrative vis-à-vis Russia, nurturing the conception of a national 'self'.

4.5   Closer to Europe

An economist from one of the largest bank groups in the Baltics noted that the tense relations with Russia can, in fact, be a "contributing factor that increases Lithuania's wish to join the Eurozone", as it "encourages greater economic integration of the Eurozone" on a psychological level. Russia is effectively framed as the "other", whereas Europe is the source of solidarity and community.[125] 'Othering' Russia therefore reinforces the Lithuanian feeling of 'Europeanness' as it is framed part of the 'civilized' and 'well-behaved' Western world.

As regards the neighbors of Lithuania, the tension over Ukraine can in fact become an impetus strengthening the regional alliances. Political Scientist Raimundas Lopata suggested that bilateral relations between Poland and Lithuania have become more dynamic, following the visit of the Vice-President of the Polish Sejm, Cezary Grabarczyk, in March, 2014. The fostering of a comprehensive dialogue could, according to Lopata, lead to the revival of Lithuanian and Polish strategic partnership.[126] Lithuanian-Polish relations went through a turbulent periods of shared history in the past, however, both seem to have found their 'significant other' in Russian federation.

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[125] "Tension with Russia Helpful for Lithuania's Eurozone Entry – UPDATED". The Lithuania Tribune, 17 Apr. 2014. <http://en.delfi.lt/66942/tension-with-russia-helpful-for-lithuanias-eurozone-entry-finasta-201466942/> (Accessed 5/17/2014)

[126] "Kuo Rusijos Agresija Gali Pasitarnauti Lietuvai." (The Russian Aggression May Serve to Lithuania) DELFI, 26 Mar. 2014. 31 May 2014. <http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/kuo-rusijos-agresija-gali-pasitarnauti-lietuvai.d?id=64367670> (Accessed 5/17/2014)

Conclusion

The Crimean Crisis of 2014 has generated diverse reactions across the European Union, posing a challenge to the international order. In response to the events of the crisis, some states' political elites were very cautious in their public declarations, whereas others appeared to be rather hawkish with regard to Russia, openly referring to it as an 'aggressor' and 'perpetrator of international law'. Through discourse analysis, two case studies of Slovakia and Lithuania were investigated in detail, to assess the difference in responses to the annexation of Crimea; as the economic-material relations with Russia fail to explain the apparent divergence between their foreign policy positions.

As the empirics demonstrate case by case, the different reactions of Slovakia and Lithuania to the Crimean Crisis were essentially linked to countries' identities in relation to Russia. Slovakia's loyalties were 'torn between' Russia and the European Union, as initially it presented an ambiguous response that was difficult for political observers to decipher. As the position of Slovakia was further articulated through time, it became clear that the discourse strategies of the leading elites were aimed at avoiding alienation from Russia which was continuously depicted as Slovakia's strategic economic partner. This was underscored more often than not with the notion of 'incompetent' Ukraine hindering the 'good' and 'friendly' relations between Slovakia and Russia. The 'shared Slavic identity' card was, interestingly, not played by the Slovak elites who rather targeted attention to the country's material relations with Russia, addressing 'national interest', 'national economic growth' and 'national energy security'. The fact that Russia played a significant role in constitutive moments of Slovak history is, however, an important aspect to consider.

In contrast, the case of Lithuania demonstrated that material relations, whether these concern trade or energy linkages, did not matter by themselves, but only once they had been framed in and through discourse. Through the strategies of *storytelling* and *threat-framing* (or

not), Lithuanian elites drew attention away from the potential economic damages that could result from pursuing sanctions against Russia. Rather, they drew analogies from the past to frame the present relations by selectively highlighting the hostile nature of the relationship.

Lithuania's reaction appears to have come across as more consensual domestically, since the events surrounding the invasion of Crimea were more easily integrated into the existing frame which portrayed Russia as 'unpredictable', 'untrustworthy', 'imperialist' and 'aggressive'. Slovakia's position was more pragmatic, putting an emphasis on the benefits of trade and energy dependency on Russia. The discourse constructed by Prime Minister Fico did not apply historical analogies of Russian invasion like in the case of Lithuania, but on the contrary, avoided such comparisons as much as possible to the discontent of his critics. Thus, the Crimean crisis was less successfully integrated into the Russia-friendly frame that the government tried to promote.

As Ehin and Berg point out, "the recognition that many of the problems in Baltic-Russian relations are rooted in history is obviously not new", however, few studies tried to link the 'diagnosis of the troubled relationship' to "broader explanatory frameworks and theoretical debates in international relations".[127] By focusing on what is neglected by Leonard and Popescu, for example, we can see that the concepts of 'storytelling', 'othering' and 'framing' help us to better understand the dynamics of the Lithuanian-Russian relationship.

As regards scholarly work on identity, "most of the existing literature focuses on Baltic and Russian identity constructions separately taken"[128]. This thesis contributes to the constructivist debate on conceptions of national identity, which are assumed as inherently relational, created through the process of socialization and social interaction. Through the

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[127] Ehin, Piret, Berg, Eiki: Identity and Foreign Policy. Baltic-Russian Relations and European Integration. Ashgate. 2009., p. 9

[128] Ibid.

analysis of the discourse surrounding the Crimean Crisis, this work demonstrates that intersubjective understandings of the 'self' and 'other' which rest on shared historical experience create expectations of behavior and have implications for foreign policy actions. The Crimean Crisis serves as an example of a 'challenged order', where long-established paradigms that provided a framework for both thinking and action are prone to 'storytelling' and identity re-assertion. How the policy-makers then 'frame' the debate constructs political reality within which threat perceptions are amplified, or by contrast, deemphasized.

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Interviews

Interview with Permanent Representative #1 from COEST in Brussels. Conducted on: April, 29 & May, 2, 2014.

Interview with Permanent Representative #2 from COEST in Brussels. Conducted on: April, 29 & May, 2, 2014.