

**Mentally Appropriated by Russia:  
The Differing Cases of Crimea and Eastern Ukraine**

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## **Abstract**

The annexation of Crimea received popular Russian support, while the ongoing conflict in the Donbas, Eastern Ukraine receives little. This thesis argues that mental appropriation is important in understanding this anomaly. Analyzing literature and movies which make reference to the regions, shows that key elements were already present well before these events took place. The elements found in these media are then contrasted with recent news covering the two conflicts. While Crimea represents a strong emotional connection to being Russian, through its exoticism, the feeling of brotherhood, and Russian suffering, the Donbas has never had a significant place in the Russian mental map. The thesis suggests considering mental appropriation as one of the factors in understanding Russia's possible foreign interventions in the future.

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## Introduction

February 2014 saw the beginning of two major military events. The annexation of Crimea astonished and shocked the world in 2014, but not the Russian popular opinion. According to the surveys conducted by the Levada Center in 2014,<sup>1</sup> throughout the year the overwhelming majority of Russians supported the annexation of the Crimea, and the rate of those opposing it never exceeded 11% in the examined period.

In fact even though it was an illegal move from the point of view of violating international law, strongly condemned by the international community and its public opinion, the domestic support of Vladimir Putin skyrocketed and the overwhelming majority of Russian popular opinion was in favor of this action. The Levada Center's polls on president Putin's acceptance<sup>2</sup> show that whereas in November 2013 he was approved by 61% and disapproved by 37%, in October 2014 the approval rate of his activities peaked at 88%, while their disapproval rate decreased to 11%. The massive growth of his support shows that this very controversial act has brought under the same flag previously antagonistic forces from a wide political spectrum from left to right. How could it unite such masses of people and particularly so fast? The formerly mentioned Levada poll shows that already in March 2014, 81% of the population supported the annexation while only 7% were opposing it. How could the Russian popular opinion accept and moreover quasi unanimously support this act from the very beginning?

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<sup>1</sup> 'Crimean Accession and Russian Participation', Levada Center.09/06/2015,acc.04/04/2018  
<https://www.levada.ru/en/2015/09/07/ukraine/>

<sup>2</sup> 'Putin's approval rating', monthly updated since:08/1999, Levada Center, acc.04/04/2018,<https://www.levada.ru/en/ratings/>

While the Crimean situation became more and more heated, riots started in Eastern Ukraine heavily backed by Russia. Separatist entities were created under the names of ‘Donetsk People’s Republic’ (DNR) and ‘Lugansk People’s Republic’ (LNR) that claimed independence from Ukraine, and have strong sentiments towards Russia. Therefore many people draw similarities between the situation of the Donbas region and that of the Crimea, based on the high rate of ethnic Russians in the territories in which Moscow claimed to defend their rights against the Ukrainian government’s oppression. Contradicting the expectations of many, even though these separatist entities repeatedly requested Moscow to join the Russian Federation, Moscow was reluctant to do so. Nevertheless, Moscow is actively engaged in providing military support to the separatists, including weapons and various ‘volunteer groups’ out of the regular army.<sup>3</sup> Although the intensity of fighting has decreased, Russian-backed forces keep violating the Minsk ceasefire agreement. The conflict seems to be just frozen instead of solved, following a very similar pattern of the ones in Abkhazia and South-Ossetia, except that Moscow did not recognize the DNR and LNR’s sovereignty.

Referring only to irredentist sentiments, in the light of the overwhelming domestic support for the annexation of the Crimea one could expect that Russian popular opinion would be in favor of annexing Eastern Ukraine as well. However, this is not the case, as the survey of the Levada Centre conducted in August 2014 shows, out of the possible scenarios concerning the Donbas region’s future, only 21% of the residents of Russia support the option of the region becoming a part of the Russian Federation.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Andrej Koshik,Vladimir Dergachev,Elizaveta Maetnaja.’I did not want to participate in hostilities on the territory of Ukraine’

07/11/2018,acc.05/10/2018,[https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2015/07/10\\_a\\_7633125.shtml?updated](https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2015/07/10_a_7633125.shtml?updated)

<sup>4</sup>Levada Center and KIIS on „Crisis in Ukraine,”05/11/2014,acc.04/10/2018

<https://www.levada.ru/en/2014/11/05/levada-center-and-kiis-about-crisis-in-ukraine/>



In spite of the resemblances of the initial situation in 2014 in Eastern Ukraine and the Crimea, apparently the policies applied by Moscow to the two territories do highly differ. This different treatment resulted in disparate outcomes as well, by turning Crimea into an integral part of the country, but supporting a protracted hybrid war in Eastern Ukraine while officially not even recognizing the separatist entities (though recognizing the official documents issued by them). Why do these policies differ so sharply?

Contrasting the sky high acceptance from Russian popular opinion of the Crimea's annexation, yet mostly opposing that of the Donbas region suggests that there should be a more coherent explanation for this difference than simply referring to nationalism or geopolitics. Since they do not serve as a satisfactory explanation for the significant difference between the overwhelming social support of one and its lack in the other, an other perspective is needed.

This thesis argues that the prior mental appropriation of the Crimea, and the lack of it in the case of Eastern Ukraine could serve as a condition for the possibility of Russia using different policies and can partially explain the differing reaction of the society of the Russian Federation. This work applies the mental appropriation used by Claudia Weiss<sup>5</sup> to describe the colonization process of Siberia, as a framework to study the process undergone in the Crimea and the Donbas. According to this framework, the mental appropriation of Siberia had two significant narratives among Russian society. The first are brotherly emotions and the cult of suffering, the second puts to the front the

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<sup>5</sup>Claudia Weiss."Appropriating Siberia for the Russian Empire", *Sibirica: Interdisciplinary Journal of Siberian Studies* 5, no.1(2006):141–55

(represented) bloodlessness of the acquisition of lands and the willingness of locals to join the Russian Empire.

As the annexation of the Crimea was already popular at the moment this move was made, supposedly this mental appropriation had happened long ago. This thesis traces how this historical appropriation happened and how it was amplified in 2014. On the other hand, as this mental appropriation process has not entirely been undergone in the case of Eastern Ukraine, it could contribute to different policies applied and divergent social reactions.

Therefore in the first section of the research the first historical wave of this mental appropriation will be studied, through the analysis of widely read books which had a significant impact on the society's perception of the two territories. Since mental appropriation should be traced not within the elite discourse but on the level of common sense, this work assumes that popular books reflect this, as Hopf suggested it within the constructivist paradigm.<sup>6</sup> Hence this section explores writers (Pushkin, Tolstoy, Chekhov, etc.) famous books where the Donbas and the Crimea appear, analyzing the attitude towards the territories in the literature.

The second section of the research analyzes the second wave of mental appropriation (in 2014), when parallel with the events, the media used the tropes very familiar and similar to the narratives mentioned above in the case of Siberia (brotherhood, cult of suffering and the bloodlessness of the fights). These narratives were well embedded in the society and grounded by the prior mental appropriation, this is why they resonated so well with the wider public.

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<sup>6</sup> Ted Hopf .“Common-sense Constructivism and Hegemony in World Politics”,*International Organization*, 67(2) (2013),317-354.

By analyzing the mental background of steps taken by Russia, this work provides a slightly different lens to look at the case of Eastern Ukraine and the Crimea than the widely used geopolitics or neo-imperialism. The conclusions drawn can contribute to understanding possible Russian interventions abroad in the future.

## First Chapter-Theoretical background

### Background

This chapter tests competing explanations for the difference of perceptions of the Russian popular opinion, and the different policies pursued by Russia. As neither nationalism, nor competitive influence-seeking or geopolitics provide a sufficient explanation for these, the use of a new, slightly differing perspective is needed.

### Nationalism

The framing of the Ukrainian conflict and the annexation of the Crimea for the Russian domestic audience from the Kremlin's side was heavily relying on national irredentist terminology while referring to Russian nation as one, single ethnic group, the biggest divided one in the world.<sup>7</sup> However, the classic irredentist narrative was apparently limited to the Crimea, and even though at the beginning of the Ukrainian conflict Russian official discourse referred to the Crimea and the Donbas region the same way, as part of Novorossiia, as time passed by Russia "de facto withdrew its claims (...) for having moral obligation to actively intervene in Eastern Ukraine the way it did in Crimea".<sup>8</sup>

A recent study on Russian nationalism shows that nationalism was nevertheless crucial on the side of Ukraine as on the side of Russia, although ethnic Ukrainian identity was more able to mobilize than Russian as the prior was more rooted in ethno-cultural resources whereas the latter in territorial, however, the concept of Russky Mir's boundaries are usually perceived as blurred. As soon as Russian nationalism became more ethno-cultural based and Eurasianist ideologists such as Alexandr Dugin became influential it started to

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<sup>7</sup>Vladimir Putin, "Address by President of the Russian Federation",03/18/2014, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/page/297>,acc.05/29/2018

<sup>8</sup> Yuri Teper,"Official Russian identity discourse in light of the annexation of Crimea: national or imperial?".*Post-Soviet Affairs* (2016)Vol 32, No.4, 378-396

gain power with a growing potential to mobilize.<sup>9</sup> There was a significant ideological work on the Kremlin's side to merge ethnic and civic national identity.<sup>10</sup> Even more so because as Hale convincingly points to it Russia's leadership is genuinely receptive to be influenced by nationalism as the country is a *patronal presidentialism*. This term refers to a constitutionally fortified presidential role, which through extensive personal networks provides its bearer with a power greatly exceeding the constitutional limitations. However, when such presidents use manipulation or corruption they take a high risk of losing popular support, thus they tend to use nationalism as a tool for 'buying' it.<sup>11</sup>

The Kremlin's move of annexing the Crimea was therefore hitting two birds with the same stone as the study of Kolstø shows. It was appealing to the Russian domestic audience and praised by the two main streams of Russian nationalists. Ethno-nationalists praised it for defending allegedly threatened ethnic Russians in the territory, while imperial nationalists saw it as a step towards resurrecting the Russian Empire and as an additional benefit, several nationalists heavily opposing Putin started to support him and his policies.<sup>12</sup>

As Charron points out, Russian nationalist mythmaking in the case of Crimea tends to be built on three main elements. The religious one stands for the place where Prince Vladimir, who turned the Kievan Rus to Christianity was baptized, therefore the Russian Orthodox Church unequivocally treated the Crimea's annexation as "divine

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<sup>9</sup> Taras Kuzio."Competing Nationalisms, Euromaidan, and the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict".*Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism:Vol.15, No.1,(2015)*

<sup>10</sup> Helge Blakkisrud."Blurring the boundary between civic and ethnic: The Kremlin's new approach to national identity under Putin's third term"in Kolsto and Blakkisrud,*The New Russian Nationalism*(2016)

<sup>11</sup> Henry E. Hale,"How nationalism and machine politics mix in Russia"in Kolsto and Blakkisrud,*The New Russian Nationalism*(2016)

<sup>12</sup> Pal Kolstø."Crimea vs. Donbas: How Putin Won Russian Nationalist Support—and Lost it Again".*Slavic Review*,(2016)75(3),702-725.

right”.<sup>13</sup> The historical one connects to the production of Soviet nostalgia that exoticized the charm of the peninsula, and the myth of Sevastopol the “heroic city”, referring to its defense in the Siege of Sevastopol back in 1855 against French, British and Ottoman allies.<sup>14</sup> No wonder that large masses are receptive to this narrative, as it offers points to connect on three different but equally important levels.

The term Novorossiia used to refer to the territories North from the Black Sea in the times of Russian Empire, but was used with slight changes in terms of its exact borders and location. In 2014 however, Vladimir Putin has suggestively mentioned<sup>15</sup> that the territories of Kharkov, Lugansk, Donetsk, Kherson, Mykolaiv and Odessa were part the historic region of Novorossiia. The separatist entities of Donetsk and Lugansk have proclaimed the confederation of Novorossiia and its desire to extend its control towards all of South-Eastern Ukraine.

As the study of Laruelle shows not only the territory itself was more complex, but a unified myth for Novorossiia was way less easy to produce as well. Different understandings even among the nationalists have deepened the cleavages between “red”(aiming to restore Russia’s great-powerness), “white” (supporting an orthodox theocracy) and the “brown” (neo-nazi) camps. However, Putin’s “hesitating” policies and refraining from annexation equally disappointed all three groups.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Nicholas E.Denysenko.”Chaos in Ukraine: the churches and the search for leadership”,*International journal for the Study of the Christian Church*,(2014)14:3, 242-259

<sup>14</sup> Austin Charron.Who’s is Crimea?:Contested Sovereignty and Regional Identity, *Regional Studies of Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia*, Volume 5, Number2, (2016)pp. 225-256

<sup>15</sup>Vladimir Putin.“Vladimir Putin’s April 17 Q&A” in *The Washington Post*, acc.05/13/2018[https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/transcript-vladimir-putins-april-17-qanda/2014/04/17/ff77b4a2-c635-11e3-8b9a-8e0977a24aeb\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.af5472d493b7](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/transcript-vladimir-putins-april-17-qanda/2014/04/17/ff77b4a2-c635-11e3-8b9a-8e0977a24aeb_story.html?utm_term=.af5472d493b7),04/17/2014

<sup>16</sup>Marlene Laruelle.”The three colors of Novorossiia. or the Russian nationalist mythmaking of the Ukrainian crisis”.*Post-Soviet Affairs*,(2016)32:1,pp 55-74

## Russian imperialism

In different scholarships there are different understandings concerning the dates from where Russia was considered to be an Empire. On the one hand many argue that it started with the colonization of Siberia.<sup>17,18</sup> Others date it from Peter the Great, who was the first to adapt the title ‘emperor’ in 1721. On the other hand it is often perceived that Russia emerged to an imperial rank with Catherine the Great’s annexation of the Crimea in 1783, as it gave Russia a breakout of the previously possessed East-West Axis to the North-South as well.<sup>19</sup>

Imperial identity is apparently a strong feature of current Russia. The influential far-right writer, Prokhanov states that Russia is entering into the 5<sup>th</sup> phase of its imperialness:

The first Russian Empire was Kievan Rus’, the second was the Moscow Kingdom, the third was the St. Petersburg Empire of the Romanovs, [the fourth] the Red Empire of the Soviet Union, and the fifth is now emerging under the leadership of President Putin.<sup>20</sup>

Expansive policies nevertheless may serve to conceal the weakness of Russia and thus be used as a shield to defend the country from a potential dismemberment caused by unsolved problems.<sup>21</sup> However, it does not provide a satisfactory explanation to the differing policies applied by Russia in the Donetsk and the Crimea. Grigas’ re-imperialization trajectory shows seven steps how Russia destabilizes its neighborhood.<sup>22</sup> These are the following: soft power, humanitarian policies, compatriot policies,

<sup>17</sup> Alexander Etkind. *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience*. (Cambridge: Polity Press. 2011)

<sup>18</sup> Alexander Astrov, Natalia Morozov. *Russian Geopolitics from the heartland, The Return of Geopolitics in Europe? Social Mechanisms and Foreign Policy Identity Crises*, (Stephano Guzzini. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)p.205

<sup>19</sup> Andrei Zorin. *Kormia dvuglavogo orla...Literatura i gosudarstvennaia ideologiiia v Rossii v poslednei treti XVIII-pervoi treti XIX veka*, ‘Feeding the Two-Headed Eagle...Literature and State Ideology in Russia in the Last Third of the 18th Century and the First Third of the 19th Century’(Moscow, Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie,2004)

<sup>20</sup> Yasmann,Victor,“Russia:The Fiction and Facto of Empire”.*Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 11/03/2006,<https://www.rferl.org/a/1072489.html>,acc.05/05/2018

<sup>21</sup> Janusz Bugajski Russia’s Pragmatic Reimperialization, *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*; Frankfurt,Winter(2010) 3-19.

<sup>22</sup> Agnia Grigas.*Beyond Crimea:The New Russian Empire* (Yale University Press,New Haven and London 2016)

information warfare, passportization, protection and ends with annexation. By not emphasizing nuances, according to this theory all neighboring countries are equally “in danger”, and are targeted by Russia, whose operations show towards the annexation as a final step.

“Symbolic imperialism” is already a more sophisticated approach, as it supposes that different territories may have different value thus being a neighbor *per se* does not obviously mean being a target or prey. According to Brzezinski the role of Ukraine in ensuring Russia’s imperialness is unarguable. “[W]ithout Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire, but with Ukraine suborned and then subordinated, Russia automatically becomes an empire”,<sup>23</sup> and he is far not alone with this view. This distinction however, still does not provide a solid explanation why certain regions of Ukraine are more desired to have “suborned and subordinated” than the others, and even less for the differing level of social support in Russia for their annexation.

### **Competitive influence-seeking**

For explaining the Russian policies applied in Eastern Ukraine, the logic of competitive influence-seeking is applicable as well. It is based on the assumption that great powers prefer a stable and friendly neighborhood. Shall that not be the case, as a second best scenario they settle for having an unstable but friendly and manageable neighbor as well,

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<sup>23</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski. “The Premature Partnership”, *Foreign Affairs*, March/April (1994), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/1994-03-01/premature-partnership,03/01/1994,acc.05/05/2018>



if by destabilizing it they can avoid the worst case which is having a stable and unfriendly neighbor.<sup>24</sup>

From the Russian geopolitical perspective Ukraine is too significant to let it back out of the Russian zone of influence shifting to Western influence, and escalating various destabilization techniques Russia may effectively deter the West (primarily the EU) from engaging with Ukraine, and the Ukrainian government from taking policy measures which could be unfavorable for Moscow.

The theory of competitive influence-seeking however, serves as an explanation for the Russian policy incentives implemented in Eastern Ukraine, but does not provide any explanation for the different outcomes of the destabilization of the former territory and that of the Crimea. As it does not differentiate between countries and territories of Russia's "neighborhood", only claiming that Russian interests dictate the destabilization of unfriendly but stable regimes, the theory does not provide with any further implementation or forecasts the expectable outcomes. Handling the whole "group" as one also misses evaluating the different level of social support for the moves. This theory considers states not to be rational actors and does not take different internal actors in account. Following this logic one can assume that the destabilization of neighboring countries or even intervening would be supported to more or less to the same extent by the Russian population, which is not proven to be so.

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<sup>24</sup> Tatyana Malyarenko, Stefan Wolff ."The logic of competitive influence-seeking: Russia, Ukraine, and the conflict in Donbas".*Post-Soviet Affairs*(2018)

## Geopolitics

Suslov analyzes how the annexation of Crimea was discussed and represented in the Russian social media.<sup>25</sup> He identifies two key findings. On the one hand, when explaining the annexation, referring to “geopolitics” works as a trump card, allowing its user not only to display an unquestionable superiority of knowledge, but also to distant itself from morality or law of nations. “It is geopolitics” as a justification seems to prevail in online discussions over any argumentation and has turned into the absolute mainstream. The predominance of geopolitics however, offers no theoretical opportunity of altering the course of events but suggests that everything is decided by great power politics only, disempowering its users, questioning the force of democratic decision-making processes and indirectly the *raison d'être* of participative democracies. This feature of discouraging and disillusioning apparently counterbalances effectively the empowering and inclusive features generally attributed to the online sphere as it eases access to discussions, information and various opinions. On the other hand, he does not only point out the limits of geopolitical explanations, but suggests deeper lying explanations.

This is what Suslov mistakes for geopolitics, but should be theorized in mental appropriation terms. His work continuously referring to geopolitics, demonstrates that when discussing the reunification with Russia, the key metaphors and discursive strategies used are prefigured and therefore organically rooted in the Russian geopolitical culture and popular imagination since the territory was first accessed in 1783 by Catherine the Great. The Russian mental landscape has emerged fast and got incorporated into the self perception of Russia as an Empire, as its extension from the previously only existing East-West axis was completed by the strongly desired North- South one as well. As such, the Crimea had a highly accentuated significance and became the metonym for

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<sup>25</sup> Mikhail D.Suslov.“Crimea Is Ours!” Russian popular geopolitics in the new media age, Eurasian Geography and Economics,(2015),55:6,588-609

the Empire, uniting the East and the West in the paradisiacal garden, governed by the wise Empress, Catherine the Great<sup>26</sup>. Acquiring the Crimea, thus turning to the “Byzantine mode of legitimization” while referring to the Greek cultural heritage, in the peak of nationalist heroism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century seemed to appear in a different light in the eyes of the traditionalist intelligentsia. Suslov points out that contrasting the Empresses’ achievement to Peter the Great’s Westernizing incentives, the Crimea emerged as a cultural metaphor, symbolizing Russia’s reconnection to its ‘true’ cultural roots and a reorientation of the imperial policy towards the Black Sea region. Even though, as the author claims as well, the Russian internet user community does not necessarily represent the Russian society as a whole, encouraging sarcastic and ironic modes of debate in politics showing an extraordinarily high percentage of opinions differing from that of the government, the fact that the imagery of the 18<sup>th</sup> century is being reactivated suggests that there is a lot more in the background than what geopolitics *per se* could serve as an explanation for. The reverberation of the metaphors of Russia as an Empire, breaking with the world order set up by the West and repositioning the policies returning to the ‘real’ Russian interests and values is traceable and has conquered the public opinion. It suggests that studying the mental appropriation of the territories is needed, as socio-historical connections have a huge influence on the popular opinion that could influence the social support of certain foreign policies.

To conclude, neither nationalism, nor Russian imperialism, the theory of competitive influence seeking or geopolitics provide a satisfactory explanation for the differing social support from Russia’s side for the idea of the annexation of the two territories, and for the differing policies Russia applied to them. Therefore this work argues that a different lens

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<sup>26</sup> Stephen Baehr. *The Paradise Myth in Eighteenth-Century Russia*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991)

should be used when studying these phenomena, and the differing level of mental appropriation of the two territories by the Russian popular opinion should be considered.

## Framework

For the above mentioned lens the framework of „mental appropriation” used by the German historian Claudia Weiss is used. She traces this process in the context of Siberia, exploring how the above mentioned mental connection was established and strengthened between Russian society and the conquered territory from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This thesis researches to what extent this mental appropriation has been undergone in Eastern Ukraine and the Crimea, and how it was similar to that of Siberia.<sup>27</sup>

In the understanding of Weiss, mental appropriation is a term that refers to a process how an elemental, substantial sense of possession of a territory is being created in a nation or ethnic group. She traces this mental appropriation of Siberia from a linguistic point of view, claiming that Russians have a special relationship with Siberia that is being reflected in the unique strength of the word *nash* ‘our’ in Russian language.

Weiss states that although Siberia plays a crucial and integral role in Russian self perception, it was not always like that. She explains the current strong attachment to the region being a result of an extremely effective mental appropriation, putting a special accent on studying the terminology *nash*. She argues for the importance of understanding the possessive relation between Russia and Siberia in order to understand the region’s role nowadays in Moscow’s eyes. She divides the conquest of Siberia into 4 steps: security measures, economic possession, colonization and mental appropriation out of which she finds the most important the latter one. This process was undergone through

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<sup>27</sup> Claudia Weiss: Representing the Empire: The Meaning of Siberia for Russian Imperial Identity, *Nationalities Papers*, Vol.35, No.3, July (2007)

exiles (having a strong mental connection to Russia being regarded by the society as the true representatives of Russians being a counter pole to autocratic Russia). Thus the imperial claim was satisfied using this strong mental claim as an instrument of acquiring this territory. This might explain the relative bloodlessness of the expansion (no armed resistance). However, this latter statement is apparently is a matter of representation, for example Etkind argued the opposite of it and explored the brutality of the spread of Russian Empire towards the East.<sup>28</sup> But all in all, being *nashi* ‘ours’ is still not equal to being part of *my* ‘us’ and this subordination is still traceable. The two most important points the application of the framework on the Donbas region and the Crimea is going to focus on are the following. First in the case of Siberia, a strong mental connection is accentuated, using the exiles as instruments (who are often perceived as the representatives of all the Russians). The mental connection is completed with a significant cult of suffering. Secondly, the expansion towards the Amur and further was pictured in the newspapers as ‘bloodless’ and free from violence or resistance, as the indigenous peoples even ‘wanted’ to be incorporated into Russia. In the focus of this study stands the second wave, or the reinforcement of this mental appropriation, that manifested in an overwhelming support from the population of Russia for the annexation of Crimea.

- 1) In the case of Siberia, a strong mental connection is accentuated, using as instruments the exiles (who are often perceived as the representatives of all the Russians). The mental connection is completed with a significant cult of suffering. In Crimea, similar patterns are noticeable, the media constantly referred to the population as Russians and especially “our Russian compatriots”,

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<sup>28</sup> Etkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience*.

highlighting their disenfranchisement in terms of language rights, education and other aspects of everyday life.

- 2) The expansion towards the Amur and further was pictured in the newspapers as ‘bloodless’ and free from violence or resistance, as the indigenous peoples even ‘wanted’ to be incorporated into Russia. This feature was extremely present in the Russian media in 2014.

## Research Design- The Process of Mental Appropriation

### Historical wave

As for the base of any further claims we should state that the mental appropriation of Crimea has really happened. For this I am going to examine the social support of the idea of annexing the territory. According to the data of Levada Center that measured the support of the idea towards the Crimea’s belonging to Russia<sup>29</sup> and also the visible strengthening tendencies of this support through periodical measurements between March and April, 2014.<sup>30</sup> According to this data, it is visible (as a snapshot) that in the moment of annexation the Crimea was already mentally appropriated by Russians. “Krymnash” (*The Crimea is Ours*) was even elected as the word of the year 2014 by Russian linguists.<sup>31</sup> Historically since its first annexation in 1783 the Crimea became an integral part of Russian and later Soviet identity with its exoticism and romanticism first as a luxury resort (which can be considered as the equivalent of Cote d’Azur for the European aristocracy), later the Soviet Union’s beloved holiday resort for the working class. Famous and impactful poets and writers wrote about the territory, and its mental

<sup>29</sup>“ Crimea”, Levada Center .11/02/2014,acc.02/27/2018 <https://www.levada.ru/en/2014/11/12/crimea/>

<sup>30</sup> “Regarding Crimea’s Accession to Russia”, Levada Center,09/12/2014 <https://www.levada.ru/en/2014/09/12/regarding-crimea-s-accession-to-russia/>acc.02/27/2018

<sup>31</sup> Elena Novoselova,“Experts chose the word of the year, ”,*Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 12/14/2014, <https://rg.ru/2014/12/14/slovo-site.html>,acc.27/02/2018

appropriation by Russians is unquestionable.<sup>32</sup> But “the Soviet Union’s collapse tore apart the cultural and historical map, (...) created by Russian imperialism and Soviet ideology”.<sup>33</sup>

This long period of appropriation is presented through the analysis of widely known and read books of prominent authors. In the beginning of the 1990’s there was a sudden rise and a sudden retreat of the Russian movement in the Crimea. According to Sasse, ethnic Russians and Ukrainians both were however, in favor of separatism. But the question was still unsolved, it stayed as a frozen tension. In the Russian Federation nevertheless, the collapse of communist social model and the Soviet Union resulted in chaotic privatizations and a grievance for losing Crimea.

As for Eastern Ukraine, this work relies on and uses secondary sources as well to detect to what extent this territory was mentally appropriated. As it had a less distinctive place in the Russian and Soviet symbolism and myths than the Crimea, lacking the charm and exoticism of the seaside, though given its developed industrial capacities within the Soviet Union, it had an important place in the Soviet self-perception as a reason for pride. Thus this work represents its appearance in the Soviet novels to trace whether this earlier phase of mental appropriation has happened and if so to what extent.

This thesis argues the point that the mental appropriation of the Crimea has undergone to a great extent and a very strong connection was established between the Russian popular opinion and the territory. As this process is traceable through literature examples, first a qualitative analysis will be pursued of novels and poems widely known for Russians, which therefore can be assumed to have an impact to the mindset of the people.<sup>34</sup> This analysis is going to trace the main motives related to the Crimea. To demonstrate the lack

<sup>32</sup> Gwendolyn Sasse. *The Crimea Question: Identity, Transition and Conflict* (Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 2007)

<sup>33</sup> Serhii Plokhyy, “The City of Glory: Sevastopol in Russian Historical Mythology”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 35, No. 3(Jul., 2000), pp.369-383

<sup>34</sup> Hopf, “Common-sense Constructivism and Hegemony in World Politics”

of the same mental appropriation on Eastern Ukraine, I am going to analyze novels taking place in the territory, pursuing a qualitative analysis tracing the main motives and contrasting them with those used for the Crimea in order to explain the difference in the strength of the mental connection with the territories.

The time frame of this part of the research is in the case of Crimea from 1824 when the first analyzed classic from Puskin, the Fountain of Bakhchisaray was published, until 1961 when the movie version of Scarlet Sails -based on the novel of Alexander Grin from 1924- was released. Concerning Eastern Ukraine, the time frame of the research is from 1896 when Alexander Kuprin's Moloch was published, until 1950 when the movie Donetsk Miners was released. However, the research focuses on the literature examples, with movies becoming more and more popular in the Soviet Union from the 1940's to complete the analysis of literature examples I found important to incorporate some of them to demonstrate that the motives traced in earlier written samples did overarch the barriers of genres and continued to exist in the movies as well. Therefore the pictures and motives found can reflect the population's approach to the territories convincingly.

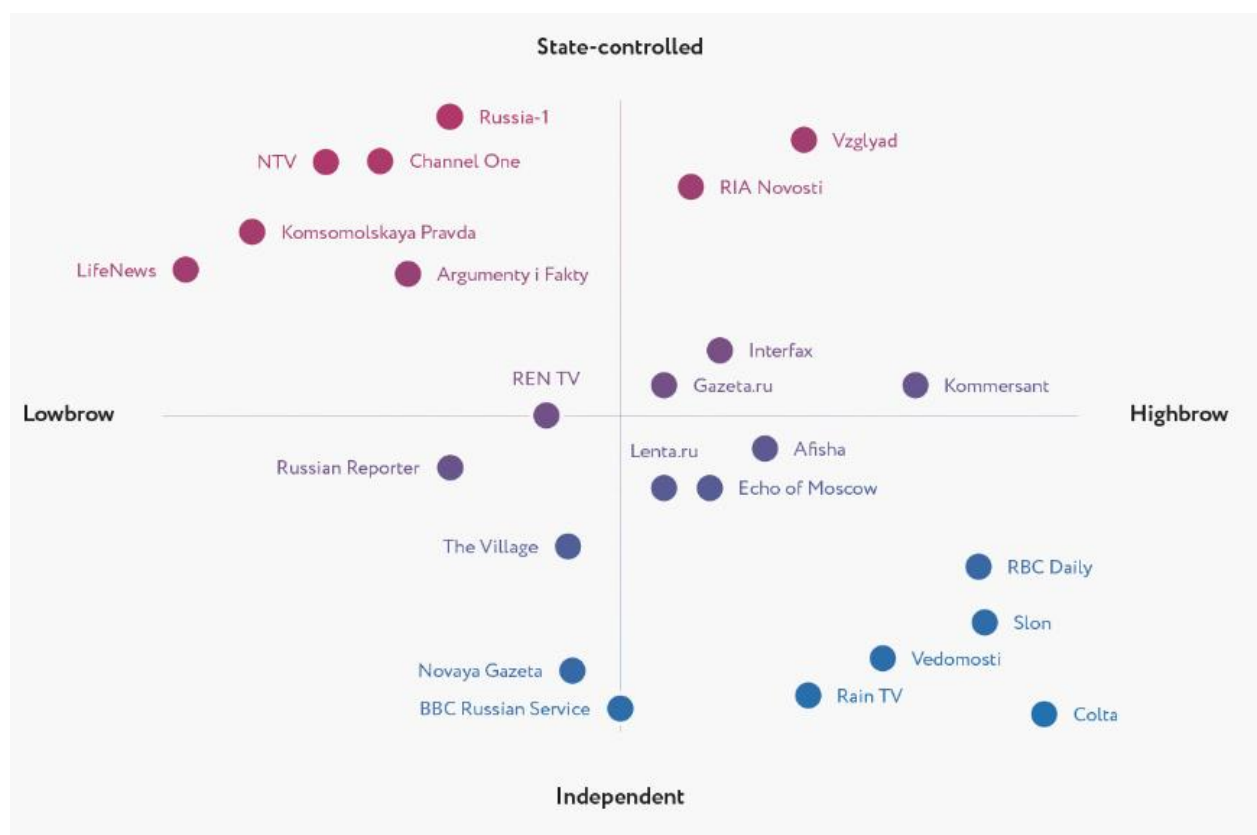
### **Amplification**

This section of the research will carry out a framing analysis of articles published in the period of February 2014 when the separatist fights started and the question of Crimea flooded the media until the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2015 when the narratives "got stabilized", the Crimea months after the annexation was well on its way of being fully incorporated into the Russian Federation on every level, and the Donbas sunk into war, thus the possibility of its fast and smooth annexation has vanished even if it existed before.

This work analyzes in the respected period the picture in the Russian media of the Crimea and that of Eastern Ukraine. This thesis analyzes random samples from three media



outlets which had a wide outreach in 2014 among Russian society. Two of them, Pervy Kanal and Dozhd' were chosen according to Media Compass of Calvert Journal.<sup>35</sup> They represent the two opposite poles of Russian politics, as explained below. The Media Compass divides the scale of media outlets along to the horizontal axis by how their content could be considered as high-, or lowbrow. The higher the mark of the outlet is, the more highbrow its content is. The vertical axis ranks them according to their independence, thus the higher this score is, the more Kremlin controlled the displayed content is. (Figure 1)

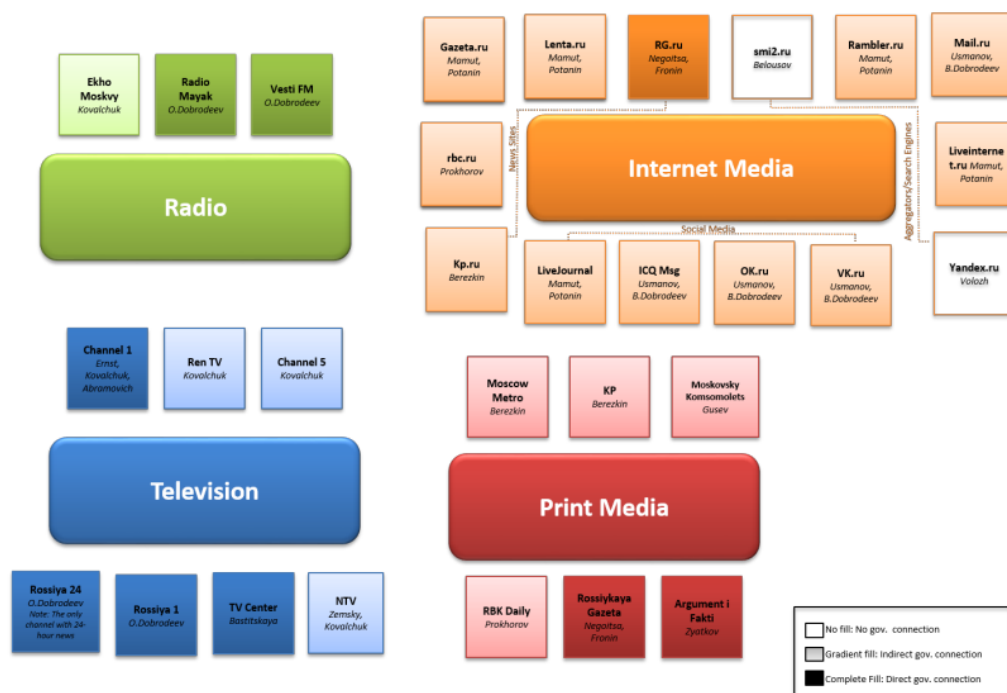


**Figure 1:Compass of the Russian media**

Source: Calvert Journal:Beard,Crews,Omidi,Pakhomova,Rann,Zinatuli. “Media Compass: Russia’s changing media landscape” (2014)

<sup>35</sup> Nadia Beard, Samuel Crews, Maryam Omid, Elena Pakhomova, Jamie Rann, Igor Zinatuli. “Media Compass: Russia’s changing media landscape”, *The Calvert Journal*, 04/2014, acc.05/02/2018 <https://www.calvertjournal.com/features/show/2234/russian-media-independent-compass>

In order to show a neutral media outlet as well, but facing the problem of availability of online archives of such outlets presented by this compass, the third, quasi neutral Moskovsky Komsomolets was chosen from a study prepared by CNA, a research organization in Arlington, VA.<sup>36</sup> They together represent the whole political spectrum, and all the three represent a middle ground in producing not too highbrow content that only a special, small target group reads, neither too lowbrow. CNA's table categorizes popular Russian media consumption according to modality, signaling with the saturation of the fill of each square referring to a given outlet its governmental connection. No fill means no governmental connection, complete fill stands for a direct governmental connection. Gradient fill means an indirect governmental connection, and the chosen Moskovsky Komsomolets is from this group.(Figure 2)



**Figure 2: Russian popular media consumption**

Source: CNA:Zakem, Saunders, Hashimova, Hammerberg(2018)

<sup>36</sup>Vera Zakem, Paul Saunders, Umida Hashimova, and P. Kathleen Hammerberg. *Mapping Russian Media Network: Media's Role in Russian Foreign Policy and Decision-making*, (January 2018) acc.05/31/2018, [https://www.cna.org/cna\\_files/pdf/DRM-2017-U-015367-3Rev.pdf](https://www.cna.org/cna_files/pdf/DRM-2017-U-015367-3Rev.pdf)

This thesis uses the online news archive of the strongly Kremlin close TV channel Pervy Kanal that has a monthly outreach of about 50 million, Moskovsky Komsomolets that is moderately independent from the government and has a monthly outreach of 8 million, and Dozhd which is one of the strongest oppositional voices with an outreach of 8.1 million.

**Pervy Kanal** is the most watched television channel according to the media compass mentioned above. It has a long history as it started to broadcast first from its concurrence after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. PK is often criticized for its highly opinionated coverage of government affairs.<sup>37</sup> Its leadership lists people very close to Putin, thus the channel is considered absolutely Kremlin-friendly.<sup>38</sup>

**Dozhd'** however, exists only since 8 years. It managed to position itself as the most significant oppositional voice among all Kremlin-controlled media outlets, "Russia's only independent television channel".<sup>39</sup> Its target group is urban middle class, therefore its content is more highbrow than that of Pervy Kanal. The channel faced and continues to cope with severe difficulties and an uncertain future as it was dropped by cable operators in 2017 after a controversial viewer poll about the Siege of Leningrad.<sup>40</sup>

**Moskovsky Komsomolets** is a popular daily, targeting mostly the capital's population, but has regional editions in several places of the Post-Soviet region as well. This tabloid can be critical to the Kremlin, but is under its indirect influence.<sup>41</sup> "Its editor-in-chief,

<sup>37</sup> Media Compass of Calvert Journal, 2014

<sup>38</sup> CNA: Zakem, Saunders, Hashimova, Hammerberg (2018)

<sup>39</sup> Editorial, "TV Rain- Russia's only independent television channel". *The Guardian*, 06/15/2015, acc. 05/31/2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/jun/09/tv-rain-russia-only-independent-television-channel>

<sup>40</sup> Media Compass of Calvert Journal

<sup>41</sup> CNA: Zakem, Saunders, Hashimova, Hammerberg (2018)

Pavel Gusev, has been in the job since 1983, an unusually long stint in Russia's volatile media market. He is believed to own much of the newspaper's stock.”<sup>42</sup>

The main elements of the narratives to be looked for were in the case of the Crimea and Eastern Ukraine the ones from the framework of the mental appropriation of Siberia. They are based on brotherhood with Russians and a strong cult of their suffering, and on their willingness to join Russia.

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<sup>42</sup> Editorial, The press in Russia”. *BBC Monitoring*,”2008,05/16/2008, acc.05/19/2018, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4315129.stm>

## **Second Chapter- The historical wave of mental appropriation**

This chapter explores how the first, historical wave of mental appropriation of the Crimea and the Donetsk took place. On the one hand, given the fact that the Crimea's first annexation happened in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it had the necessary time and exoticism to become deeply embedded in the mental landscape of Russia. This chapter demonstrates the peninsula's role and importance using samples from Russian literature which are widely read, commonly known and can be considered as part of the common knowledge and heritage of Russians. Therefore the choice of pieces to analyze was made according to the following factors: how well known the author is, and how widely read the given piece is. Every piece chosen is considered as a world literature classic.

On the other hand, as Donetsk was populated by Russians only in the grandiose and wide-scale industrialization initiatives at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the territory is less exotic than the Crimea, its recognition is examined and analyzed through novels from this period of time. In fact these novels were not widely read and did not become literature classics, therefore one of those available, and a propaganda movie from 1950 is analyzed in order to explore the nature of the connection between the territory and the Russian popular opinion's relation.

### **The Crimea**

The main leading motives of Russian classics related to the Crimea can be grouped as to its specificity being the Russian Empire's and later the Soviet Union's most prestigious holiday resort, that can be intertwined with strong nostalgic feelings about the empire and being a citizen of a great power. The second is related to the "Sevastopol myth". These

two levels, plus its religious importance, were considered by Charron<sup>43</sup> the key why Russians feel such a strong connection with the peninsula.

### ***From exoticism to ‘our summer house’***

Alexander Pushkin was the first to make the Crimea famous. He is unquestionably one of the most widely known Russian writers not only among Russians but also worldwide, therefore as he wrote about the territory, he put it to the interest of people. As he was exiled from Saint Petersburg to the South for his poems about freedom, which were labeled as dangerous and nationalist, he experienced an unexpected liberty due to the huge distance from the bureaucratic Moscow and the imperial capital St Petersburg. His exile did not turn out as planned by the tsar, since the punishment ended up being a rehabilitation for him. The main themes he uses, liberty and exoticism laid down the groundwork for future references to the Crimea.

### **Exoticizing the indigenous Tatars**

Pushkin pictured the Crimea as a truly exotic place, that is entirely different from the other parts of Russia. In his poem, *The Fountain of Bakhchisaray*<sup>44</sup> where the whole story takes place on the peninsula, he describes in details the power relations in the harem of the Khan.

The poem bears the subtitle “The tale of the Tauride” which refers to its Greek and Byzantine heritage. The choice of topic refers as well to its exoticism, as the whole story takes place in the harem of the Tatar khan. It was definitely something that the average Russian reader by the time of its publication in 1824 found mysterious, special and engaging. Pushkin distances it in geographical sense by referring to the territory as “East”, whereas it is not further East than Moscow for example. “Luxurious East! how soft

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<sup>43</sup> Charron: Whose is Crimea? See the first chapter.

<sup>44</sup> Aleksandr Pushkin, *The Bakchesarian fountain*. Trans. William D. Lewis (Ardis Publishers, 1987)

thy nights, What magic through the soul they pour! How fruitful they of fond delights To those who Mahomet adore! ”<sup>45</sup>

The picture drawn of the Tatars is as romantic and culturally far from the traditional Russian orthodoxy as possible. This approach was very common within the Orientalism in Russia, as it did not only describe the East, but assured the supremacy of the West.<sup>46</sup> The way how Pushkin refers to the Crimea fits well in the line how the Russian colonization of the East was viewed and implemented.<sup>47</sup> Distancing it from the West and the orthodox values of Russia includes emphasizing the subordinated position of women as slaves captured in the harem, using words such as *Giaour*,<sup>48</sup> and mentioning Arabia and the Koran.

Has treason scaled the *harem's wall*, Whose height might treason's self appall, And *slavery's* daughter fled his power, To yield her to the daring *Giaour*?(...) Treason could never enter there. Their beauties unto none revealed, *They bloom within the harem's towers*, As in a hot-house bloom the flowers Which erst *perfumed Arabia's field*. (...)But the *vile eunuch* too is there, In his base duty ever zealous, Escape is hopeless to the fair From ear so keen and eye so jealous. He ruled the *harem*, order reigned *Eternal there*; the trusted treasure He watched with loyalty unfeigned, His only *law his chieftain's pleasure*, Which as the *Koran* he maintained.<sup>49</sup>(*italics added*)

However, he puts this ‘oriental’ territory into a very positive light, describing in details its affluence, fruitfulness and magic. A repetitive element is the praising of this exotic architecture that helps the reader to imagine the harem from the inside, needless to say, as exotic as it might be. Abundant description of silken carpets, gold, marble and the breeze of the ambient air highly contribute to the imagery of the magical East and suggests a fabulous wealth:

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Penguin Books, 2007)

<sup>47</sup> Etkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience*.

<sup>48</sup> *Giaour* is an Arabic word with the meaning “faithless”, used by Muslims to non-Muslims.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

Around on silken carpets crowded, Viewing, beneath a heaven unclouded, With childish joy the fishes play And o'er the marble cleave their way, Whose golden scales are brightly glancing, And on the mimic billows dancing. Now female slaves in rich attire Serve sherbet to the beauteous fair, Whilst plaintive strains from viewless choir Float sudden on the ambient air (...) And ruined garden luxury breathes, The fountains play, the roses bloom, The vine unnoticed twines its wreaths, Gold glistens, shrubs exhale perfume. (...) Their beads of amber chose the fair, Columns with marble turbans crowned Their resting-place.<sup>50</sup>

## The romantic resort

Another way of showing the Crimea as an exotic place was to picture it as a holiday resort. This representation became stronger and more common as time passed. While Pushkin was impressed by the ‘otherness’ and Asiatic features of the Tatars and their architecture, the next great generation of writers and poets (starting from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century) preferred to present it as an excellent place for spending holidays. This is the next stage of mental appropriation, as a place becomes more and more popular, it is still exotic but much less unreachable and mysterious. It is habitual, and starts to be regarded more and more as ‘our summer house’.

Being a prestigious holiday resort, the Crimea was pictured as an excellent place for a romance for example. Chekhov’s short story, *The lady with the dog*<sup>51</sup> describes a romance that started in Yalta, an important city of the Crimea where the main characters went separately on holiday. The scene provided by the Crimea is shown to be a typical seaside resort, far from the problems, the hustle and bustle of Moscow and Saint Petersburg. The actors feel free, liberated on the picturesque peninsula. As for the background of the main actors, both come from a wealthy, noble social circle that represents well that in the Russian Empire the Crimea was considered as the ultimate place for a holiday for the aristocracy.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Anton Chekhov, *The lady with the dog*, Trans. Constance Garnett (The Modern Library, New York 1999)



The Crimea's reputation as a great place for a romantic getaway did not fade away with the fall of the Russian Empire. Alexander Grin's *Scarlet sails*<sup>52</sup> refer to the Crimea in a highly similar way, though already in a different period, during the Soviet times in 1923: it is the venue for a romance by the sea. Since a famous movie was made out of this book still in the Soviet period, it could reach an even larger population. The seaside was pictured in all its beauty, and was displayed as the Soviet Union's own Riviera.

Nabokov's novels repeatedly refer to the Crimean shore with tenderness, reinforcing the lovely light the Crimea is thought of in. As an example, in *The Seaport*<sup>53</sup> the main character desires to get back his social prestige as it meant he could go to the Crimea on holiday again: "He *dreamt* he was an *officer again*, walking along a *Crimean slope* overgrown with milkweed and oak shrubs, mowing off the downy heads of thistles as he went." In *Music*<sup>54</sup> as another example, the Crimea is pictured yet again as a holiday resort. "[The loving couple] lived neither in luxury nor in poverty, and *went swimming in the sea almost* all year round. The jellyfish, washed up onto the *shingly beach*, trembled in the wind. *The Crimean cliffs glistened in the spray*." In *The Circle*,<sup>55</sup> having a weekend house in the Crimea is pictured as a normal and desirable thing for a noble family who did not intend to spend the warmer months in Saint Petersburg: "Meanwhile his *family summered in the south*, apparently *preferring their Crimean country place* to their Petropolitan one. Their winters were spent in the capital." Here one can see that what has primarily been exotic and unreachable for an average person, ceases to be inaccessible. However, having a house in the Crimea was not a desire everyone could fulfill, but the

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<sup>52</sup> Alexandr Grin, *Scarlet sails*. (Scribner in New York 1967)

<sup>53</sup> Vladimir Nabokov. *The Seaport*, as in *The stories of Vladimir Nabokov* Translator: Dmitri Nabokov et al., (Alfred A. Knopf, 1995)

<sup>54</sup> Vladimir Nabokov. *Music*, as in *The stories of Vladimir Nabokov* Trans. Dmitri Nabokov et al. (Alfred A. Knopf, 1995)

<sup>55</sup> Vladimir Nabokov, *The Circle*, as in *The stories of Vladimir Nabokov* Trans. Dmitri Nabokov et al. (Alfred A. Knopf, 1995)

Crimea counts no longer as exotic and mysterious. At this point the peninsula is a place of escape from the problems of the city to feel liberated and free.

Liberty as an element also appears, as the everyday problems of life and work were usually left behind in St Petersburg or Moscow, therefore people could enjoy their time there carefree and joyful. It was not difficult, since as it is described often, the nature is picturesque, the climate is Mediterranean, the weather is sunny, bright and warm. All these together have formed the picture of the peninsula in the popular opinion, that with smaller changes continued to exist in the Soviet period – as instead of the aristocracy, now the elite of the party and the best workers had the chance to enjoy the Crimean seaside.

What is common in these works picturing the Crimea as the ultimate romantic resort is based on several factors. As in the times of the Russian Empire the aristocracy preferred to spend their holidays there it became a desired place, intertwining high class life and prestige in society. However, not only this, as in Music the mentioned couple was neither wealthy nor poor yet they could live there enjoying the life by the sea.

As demonstrated above, exoticism was a significant feature of the peninsula's representation in the Russian literature, however, its tools have slightly changed as time passed. While Pushkin at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century accentuated the Asianness and Arabic features of the Tatars on the territory that revealed an unknown and special world for Russian readers, starting from the next generation of writers the character of the Crimea has turned into something much more domestic however, distant. Paradoxically even though it was still 'distant', it was in a 'familiar distance'. It was no longer a different, hidden culture, but an excellent holiday resort – the privilege to spend time

there a desired status symbol. The Russian popular soul has embraced and mentally appropriated it, as ‘our beach’ or ‘our summer house’, that became unquestionably a part of the mental map of Russia.

### ***Sevastopol myth***

The “Sevastopol myth”<sup>56</sup>, is a strongly nationalist legend, that stems from the Crimean War, and is able to induce strong national feelings. Its most famous example in literature is Leo Tolstoy’s *Sevastopol Sketches* or *Sebastopol Sketches*,<sup>57</sup> where he lays down the foundation of the Sevastopol myth that is based on the city’s heroic resistance until the withdrawal of Russian forces during the Crimean war. It appeals to patriotic sentiments, pride, and heroic sufferings in order to defend the country. Its main features are its nationalism and the cult of heroic suffering. Mental appropriation does happen through heroism and the appreciation of the deeds of the defenders of the country.

### **Nationalism**

Russia as a whole is very strongly connected to Sevastopol and to what its major city symbolizes, therefore it is possible to analyze the origins of this relation. This strong connection is easily traceable among others by the existence and acclaim of the following exceedingly known song about the heroic city as well from 1954 that is popular ever since. It is the official anthem of the city, but known Russia-wide. The text of this song highlights its principal role as a defender, therefore it is extremely easy to feel related to it.

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<sup>56</sup> Charron, Whose is Crimea?

<sup>57</sup> Lyof N. Tolstoy. *Sevastopol* (Thomas Y. Cromwell & Co. Copyright, 1888)

The *legendary* Sevastopol, *Unapproachable for enemies.*  
 Sevastopol, Sevastopol - The *pride* of Russian sailors! (...)  
 Here we are in battle, holy and right, They went *for their homeland*,  
 And your former *glory* We multiplied in battle. (...)  
 The whole country [Russia] knows, That ships do not sleep,  
 And reliably *protects Shores of the native land* (...) <sup>58</sup>(italics added)

Analyzing the main key words of the lyrics, one can see that the same tropes are used as were in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as demonstrated as follows. One can see pride, the position in the battle is “holy and right”, and glory embraces the defenders of the Motherland. The fact that the anthem of the city did not change when it belonged *de facto* to Ukraine suggests a substantial relation between Russia and the city. Likewise the fact that when Ukrainian, rewritten lyrics for the song appeared on the internet, it caused a major outrage among Russians, labeling it as a trial to expropriate a vital part of Russian history.<sup>59</sup> Singing it in Ukrainian was even banned by law in 2015, which suggests a deep attachment to this song and primarily to its content.<sup>60</sup> The phrase of ‘never sleeping ships’ refers to the Russian fleet that had its naval base in Sevastopol even after the dismemberment of the Soviet Union, due to an agreement with Ukraine. The presence of the fleet on the territory did definitely add to the city’s overall “sense of belonging” to Russia.

Tolstoy’s descriptions were written in the time of the Siege of Sevastopol in 1854-55, as he served on the peninsula, therefore does not romanticize it retrospectively as many writers did later. Of course this is not to say his work lacks romanticizing or enhancing the heroic attitude of the defenders of the Motherland (as it was dictated by the Zeitgeist of romanticism as well), but to underline the fact that he documented his own experiences there thus might not be biased by other’s works. As the book’s main message is based on

<sup>58</sup>Petr Gradov, Vano Muradeli, “*Legendary Sevastopol*”, *Soviet Music*, 1954  
<http://www.sovmusic.ru/english/text.php?fname=lsevast>, acc.05/30/2018

<sup>59</sup> Regnum Information Agency, ‘An official of the Ukrainian Navy translated the hymn of Sevastopol into Ukrainian, “to embroil Russians harder”’ 05/30/2006, acc.05/30/2018, <https://regnum.ru/news/648506.html>

<sup>60</sup> Ivan Zhilin, ‘Singing the anthem of Sevastopol in Ukrainian was legally banned’. *Novaja Gazeta*. 05/30/2015, acc.05/30/2018. <https://www.novayagazeta.ru/news/2015/05/30/112588-gimn-sevastopolya-zakonodatelno-zapretili-ispolnyat-na-ukrainskom-yazyke>

the heroicness and grandeur of Russian soldiers, whose acts are put in sharp contrast with the senseless bloodshed that lacks morals and virtues of war times. To give an insight, the following citation represents the overall tone and message of the book well:

*We will die, children, but we will not surrender Sevastopol;” and our Russians, who are not fitted to be phrase-makers, replied: “We will die! hurrah!”(...) the very heroes of those grievous times, who have not fallen, but have been raised by the spirit, and have joyfully prepared for death, not for the sake of the city, but of the country. This epos of Sevastopol, whose hero was the Russian people, will leave mighty traces in Russia for a long time to come*<sup>61</sup>(italics added)

### Heroic suffering

Russian popular soul is often associated with a strong cult of suffering, where suffering itself is in a positive light.<sup>62</sup> Russian literature is full of examples for it, and Tolstoy’s work is no exception. Tremendous amount of physical and mental suffering is displayed that Russian soldiers and sailors sent there had to live through. However, the piece shows wounded or dying men usually downplaying their pain and sorrow, it is mostly the female characters around them who describe the anguish of the men. Hence their heroic role and steadfastness can be shown as even more ‘manly’ and convincing as they never complain, only do what has to be done. The reader faces a myriad of virtues characterizing the Russian soldiers who fear no pain and work. Tolstoy concludes his dialogue with the wounded sailor who constantly downplays his sorrow:

You begin to understand *the defenders of Sevastopol*. For some reason, you *feel ashamed of yourself in the presence of this [heroic] man*. You would like to say a very great deal to him, in order to express to him your sympathy and admiration; but you find no words, or you are dissatisfied with those which come into your head,—and you *do reverence in silence before this taciturn, unconscious grandeur and firmness of soul, this modesty in the face of his own merits*.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Sevastopol Sketches pp.15

<sup>62</sup> Rancour-Laferriere, Daniel. *The Slave Soul of Russia: Moral Masochism and the Cult of Suffering*. (New York; London: NYU Press, 1995) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qg1cj>

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

Heroic suffering of the soldiers in the defense of the Motherland could lead to an earlier mental appropriation through them such as in the case of that described by Weiss in the colonization of Siberia. Especially the fact that the two main characters die in the end for Russia, could strengthen the connection between the Crimea and Russians suffering there for other Russians.

## **Eastern Ukraine**

Contrasting the Donbas's representation in literature to that of the Crimea's the difference could hardly be any bigger. First of all, it is rather difficult to find any relevant source mentioning the territory which was not the case in the Crimea. It may be explained by several factors. On the one hand, the majority of Russian population arrived to the territory later than for example Tolstoy or Chekhov lived, according to the Russian Imperial Census of 1897, only 28,7% was Russian.<sup>64</sup> As the local Ukrainian population (that at the above mentioned census made up 54% of the population) was strongly affected by the Holodomor and Stalin's Russification policies, the proportion of Russians in the territory has highly increased in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>65</sup> On the other hand given the utterly different character of the region, being an industrial center it could hardly compete with the popularity of the Crimea as is demonstrated below. However, in the Soviet Union industrialization and work itself were praised, probably people wanted to read about something different than their everyday life, that they could long for. The Donbas was not such a place.

One of the few significant novels written referring to the territory is *Moloch*, written by Alexander Kuprin in 1896. This book was a strong criticism against Russian capitalism

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<sup>64</sup> Hiroaki Kuromiya. *Freedom and Terror in the Donbas: A Ukrainian-Russian Borderland, 1870s–1990s*. (Cambridge University Press, 2003) pp. 41–42

<sup>65</sup> Piotr Eberhardt. *Ethnic Groups and Population Changes in Twentieth-Century Central-Eastern Europe*. (Armonk, M.E. Sharpe, 2013) pp. 208–209

and the inequalities it brought. Its story line takes place in the Donbas, and there are no exoticizing descriptions, nor is it pictured as a pleasant place to be. It is rather displayed as an industrial centre: noisy, dirty and exhausting where the lowest social classes work and are heavily exploited. As an example: “A long blast from the mill siren announced a new working day. The deep, raucous sound seemed to come up from the bowels of the earth, spreading low above the ground. The murky dawn of a rainy August day tinged it with melancholy and foreboding.”<sup>66</sup> The loud, irritating voices, poor weather conditions reflect well the miserable mood and life of people. Their discomfort even pairs up with purposeless: “Everything seemed to be *heaped up without rhyme or reason*, a freak of chance.”<sup>67</sup>

The signal found Engineer Bobrov drinking tea. During the last few days *he had been suffering more than ever before from insomnia*. Although he went to bed with a heavy head and started every moment with a jolt, he managed quite soon to drop off into a *restless sleep*; but he woke up long before dawn, *shattered and irritable*. This was doubtless *due to mental and physical strain*, and to his *old habit of taking injections of morphia*, a habit which he had recently begun to fight in earnest.<sup>68</sup> (*italics added*)

Apparently there is nothing exotic or appealing in this description. Only grey weekdays, resignation and fatigue. No charm of the easy life of the aristocracy at the holiday resort by the sea, this description could have been written about any industrial neighborhood in Russia. There is no carefree, desired life in Donbas. No romances born during sweet beach walks among picturesque scenes. Neither is it ‘our beach’ or ‘our summer house’. The life of workers is tiring, monotonous and painful. This pain is not even the heroic suffering that the Sevastopol fighters took in order to defend the Motherland. In fact there is nothing pathetic in it or nothing that would refer to the noble cause behind all the hard work, probably this is why it seems so purposeless. As for the description of nature, one mostly does not find attractive features:

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<sup>66</sup> Alexander Kuprin, Moloch. From “The Garnet Bracelet and Other Stories” Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow accessed via: [https://archive.org/details/MOLOCH\\_627pp.1](https://archive.org/details/MOLOCH_627pp.1)

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.p.2

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.p.1

It was a (...) town of red brick, bristling with *tall, soot-blackened chimneys*, reeking of *sulphur and molten iron*, deafened by a *never-ending din*. The formidable stacks of four *blastfurnaces* dominated the scene. Beside them rose eight hot-blast stoves for circulating heated air, *eight huge iron towers* topped with round domes(...)White, *acrid lime dust* hung in the air like *mist*.<sup>69</sup>

No traces of the harmony pictured in the Crimea. The beauty of the nature is changed for the massive, polluted industrial environment.

The motives shown in the book of 1897 did not undergo significant changes as time passed. One can see them reappear in the representation of the territory in the movie *Donetsk Miners* that was shot in 1950.<sup>70</sup> As the title suggests, this work -which is representative for its period and a textbook example of Soviet propaganda movies- shows the everyday life of miners in the Donbas. Even though it puts the emphasis on the glory of work, as the core value of Soviet society, it points to the darker side of life there. It romanticizes the village houses and the community of the city that unites for Communist celebrations in an exemplary way, but does not miss to show how inhuman and heavy miners work is. Obviously, it is wrapped up in a way how it accentuates the heroic qualities of the workers, but the overall impression of heroism is much less graspable than in the case of Sevastopol soldiers for instance. Technically when the environment is filmed, often industrial sites, factories, smoking chimneys are shown, that however, may suggest the development of the region, is hardly comparable in the effect to the audience with the spectacular, clear nature with bright, sunny weather usually associated with the Crimea.<sup>71</sup> Therefore as the hard working conditions, undesirable, not exactly tempting environment serve primarily to enhance the manliness and strength of miners, the territory itself does not seem to be very appealing. The enumerated features of this

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.p.2

<sup>70</sup> Leonid Lukov, *Donetskie shakhtery*, 'Donetsk Miners' Kinostudiya im. Gorkogo , 1950,acc.05/24/2018 ,[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yr\\_4gH\\_sMWQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yr_4gH_sMWQ)

<sup>71</sup> Lukov, *Donetskie shakhtery* 5:06,5:20,6:09,6:17,6:32,25:51,59:42



territory apparently are much less effective in inducing and establishing a special connection between the readers and the place itself.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter showed the enormous differences between the extent how much the Crimea and the Donbas was mentally appropriated. Through the examples taken from Russian literature, one can see that while in the case of Crimea two main themes were presented. One was the exotic feature of the peninsula that has started by highlighting the “Asianness” of the culture of indigenous Tatars, later turning into the representation of a romantic holiday resort, accessible for the privileged, but definitely ‘ours’. The other was the Sevastopol myth that is combining strong national sentiments and the gravity of heroic suffering for the territory and in order to defend the motherland. Both topics provide an excellent opportunity to connect to them and to develop a strong mental appropriation for Russians.

On the other hand in the case of Donbas one does not find any of the above mentioned points to connect. The region was repeatedly pictured as an industrial place, where workers are exploited and where fatigue and poverty rule. Therefore this place was neither desirable, nor very tempting for the Russian population to fantasize about. The mental appropriation has therefore not happen, the territory did not become a significant part of the mental map of Russia. As the following chapter points out, the difference between the mental appropriation of the two territories had a huge impact on the Russian popular opinion, and indirectly to its reaction to the narratives of the 2014 events.

### **Third Chapter- The second wave of mental appropriation**

This chapter examines the key themes used by three chosen Russian media outlets concerning the Ukrainian crisis, the conflict in the Crimea and in Eastern Ukraine. The outlets were chosen according to the compass mentioned in the introductory chapter. The focus of this research was on the narrative of Pervy Kanal (PK) given its predominant position on the market, with an outreach of 50 million in average. Since the channel is very Kremlin-close, together with Rossiya-1 they represented the same point of view. It should be considered that since the latter channel has an outreach reach of about 50 million as well, this narrative was incomparably better represented than oppositional or centralist views. However, in order to provide a fuller insight into the diversity of opinions this work analyzes the narrative of the strongly oppositional Dozhd' with its reach of 8,1 million, and Moskovsky Komsomolets (MK) with that of 8 million as well.<sup>72</sup>

The competition was far from being equal given financial and administrative difficulties that Dozhd' had to face (and that PK as being a government-close channel did not), the fact that Dozhd's content is more highbrow than the former thus targets a smaller audience than PK adds significantly to this difference in popularity and reception. Given the above mentioned reasons the leading narrative of PK presumably had a much stronger impact on the popular opinion than other views. The analysis is organized around certain themes that determined the narrative of the different media outlets, and within the theme they follow each other chronologically. As PK had the strongest voice, and thematized the public discourse effectively, this chapter takes its leading themes one by one, contrasting them with the narrative of the two other examined media outlet, and to the key elements of the mental appropriation described by Weiss mentioned in the section "Framework". In her study the leading tropes for mentally appropriating the territory of

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<sup>72</sup> Media Compass of Calvert Journal(2014)

Siberia were on the one hand an intertwined combination of representation and a cult of suffering: “they represent us, and they suffer for their Russianness, therefore they suffer for us”. On the other hand when annexing new and new territories, the narrative that this spread happens bloodlessly (or at least is represented as such) because the locals want to join the Russian Empire in hope of better, civilized life was accentuated. Therefore this section groups these two leading themes of Weiss’s study and shows how PK’s narrative was based primarily on them to a huge extent when dealing with the Ukrainian crisis.

In addition, this chapter argues that the contrast in the conflicts’ framing in the two regions, picturing the Donbas as an active agent but depriving the Crimea from the same, could highly contribute to the difference in the level of mental appropriation by Russians of the territory.

## **Threats to Russians**

### **Inability of the Ukrainian government**

The narrative used by the Kremlin friendly Pervy Kanal (PK) was heavily built on the assumption that Russians are being discriminated, thus they have to be afraid of the government’s fascism and forced Ukrainization measures as well as the fascism of the violent groups the government is unable to control.

PK pictured the Ukrainian leadership and state as absolutely incapable of ruling, to solve the crisis and reconstruct order in the country. Their correspondences emphasized the security aspect of the riots. They refer to the protesters as extremists, neo-fascists and neo-nazis, showcasing the brutality and danger the mass protests themselves represent.

The focus though is slightly shifting to Eastern Ukraine and the Crimea as time passes. A good illustration of this is the correspondence of 26<sup>th</sup> February that is built around the

problem of the Ukrainian state's inability to pay pensions and the salary of public sector workers. It pictures the economic crisis in the country (several Russian banks were closed in Kiev) as a situation with no hope, blaming the gravity of the situation on the government's inability to 'establish order'. Even though the news are about all Ukraine with no specificity mentioned to its Eastern part, the people interviewed are all from Donetsk.<sup>73</sup> They are desperate as they did not receive their salary for months. The report also shows how people are queuing for bread, and other civil war-like scenes. Overall the message of this correspondence is that people suffer because of the inability of the Ukrainian government.

Picturing a perceived power vacuum left by the othered and demonized Ukrainian government that does not serve and represent the interest of its people, it is a logical next step to fill in the vacuum left by the 'other' by the 'self'. The power vacuum was filled in a different way in the Crimea and in Eastern Ukraine. Corruption and the 'mafia-like' state structure was a serious problem in Ukraine as a whole<sup>74</sup>. However, according to Mulford Eastern Ukraine- far from Moscow and Kiev as well- was "the most corrupt and ungovernable region."<sup>75</sup> Quoting locals "every third man in the Donetsk region is in prison, has been in prison or will be in prison."<sup>76</sup> As Mark Galeotti states, while on the surface Ukraine and Russia fight for control in Donbas, Ukrainian and Russian underground criminal networks flourish and collaborate, since war, the rise of the black market and the possibilities of benefitting from the plight of internally displaced people

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<sup>73</sup>Pervy Kanal: 'No money in the Ukrainian state budget to pay salaries and pensions, nothing for debt' 02/26/2014, acc. 04/23/2018 [https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-02-26/52761-v\\_ukrainskoy\\_kazne\\_net\\_deneg\\_na\\_zarplaty\\_i\\_pensii\\_nechem\\_platit\\_po\\_dolgam](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-02-26/52761-v_ukrainskoy_kazne_net_deneg_na_zarplaty_i_pensii_nechem_platit_po_dolgam)

<sup>74</sup> Mark Galeotti, "How the Invasion of Ukraine Is Shaking Up the Global Crime Scene," Vice News, 6 November 2014, [www.vice.com/read/how-the-invasion-of-ukraine-isshaking-up-the-global-crime-scene-1106](http://www.vice.com/read/how-the-invasion-of-ukraine-isshaking-up-the-global-crime-scene-1106) (accessed 1 July 2015)

<sup>75</sup> Joshua P. Mulford "Non-State Actors in the Russo-Ukrainian War" *Connections*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Spring 2016), pp. 89-107 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26326442> acc. 05/06/2018

<sup>76</sup> Piotr Kosicki, Oksana Nesterenko, "Eastern Ukraine Has Been a Mafia State for Years. Can Kiev Break the Cycle of Violence?" *New Republic*, 06/05/2014

are a huge business for some after all.<sup>77</sup> All this suggests that as the criminal networks were stronger there than anywhere else in Ukraine, separatist entities emerging from organized criminal groups and militias could fill this power vacuum.<sup>78</sup> In the case of Crimea, as local organized criminal groups could not get as strong as in the Donbas, thus filling up the vacuum for a ‘patronizing’ state-actor (Russia being pictured as the wisely led country where safety, security and prosperity rules) is a quasi straight consequence according to the narrative used by Pervy Kanal.

It was a very determining element of the overall narrative used by PK, that did not disappear nor did it become softer, as the minor’s protest’s coverage in Donetsk shows it in the middle of April too.<sup>79</sup> PK did not miss the opportunity to cover drunk ‘volunteer’ soldiers of Ukraine engaging into fight each other, to display the lack of organization but the existence of aggression.<sup>80</sup>

### **Nazis, fascists, extremists**

Closely linked with the insecurity in the country that PK’s narrative blamed entirely the Ukrainian government for, it focused especially on the extremists taking part in the protests. Even though the radicals made only a fraction of the protesters, the reports represented all the crowd as such. It is important to mention that the Russian usage of the word “fascist” has a slightly different notion comparing to that of the West.<sup>81</sup>

While exploiting the fascist threat PK’s focus shifted gradually to the “hot points” of the conflict, putting local riots to the front instead of the ones in Kiev. As an example of the

<sup>77</sup> Mark Galeotti, “Ukraine’s Mob War,” *Foreign Policy*, 1 May 2014, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/05/01/ukraines-mob-war/> acc.04/27/2018

<sup>78</sup> Mulford, “Non-State Actors in the Russo-Ukrainian War”

<sup>79</sup> Pervy Kanal, ‘Program’Time’, 21:00, 04/23/2014 acc.04/28/2018, <https://www.1tv.ru/news/issue/2014-04-23/21:00#3>

<sup>80</sup> Pervy Kanal, ‘In Eastern Ukraine the unrest does not quiet down’, 04/03/2014, acc.04/28/2018 [https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-04-03/47320-na\\_vostoke\\_ukrainy\\_ne\\_stihayut\\_volneniya](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-04-03/47320-na_vostoke_ukrainy_ne_stihayut_volneniya)

<sup>81</sup> Andreas Umland, “Concepts of Fascism in Contemporary Russia and the West”, *Political Studies Review*, Volume:3 issue:1, (2005)

26<sup>th</sup> of February shows, the narrative enhances the grievances and above all the fear of people of Simferopol (Crimea), who are feeling threatened and menaced by the often referred fascists, and the Ukrainian government's inability to control the situation. "Fascism threatens us, real fascism, what they are doing is scary, they already howl with malice, what is happening in Sevastopol ... And they will try to come here," says a local woman.

We are already trying to turn off the [TV] channels ... Already our Sevastopol channel that we have been watching lately does not work (...) Tomorrow our children will be forced to speak Ukrainian, everyone, among themselves (...) We are outraged so that there is nowhere to retreat.<sup>82</sup>

Being deprived of the use of Russian language is a repeatedly occurring element of the narrative used by Pervy Kanal, on the same day they reported on a solidarity action from Lvov supporting Russian language usage in the Crimea.<sup>83</sup> On the same day the news about the call for a referendum is illustrated with the words of a member of the Supreme Council of the Crimea:

People demand one thing - seeing the lawlessness that is going on in Kiev, seeing all this Bandera terror, (...) no confidence in the authorities that today in Kiev call themselves power, absolutely illegitimate, and that the Supreme Council of Crimea determined how to be further.<sup>84</sup>

As these examples show, the fear from fascists and violent radicals was presented on the political leadership's and the citizen's level as well. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of February, already the Crimean people are in the center of news with their mass protests, gathering in front of the local parliament, cheering for the call for a referendum on the independence. The crowd is contrasted by every means to the protesters of the fascists, neo-nazis and extremists in Kiev, and also to the protesters of Donetsk, where violence is also

<sup>82</sup> Pervy Kanal, 'On the political map of Ukraine new hot points occur' 02/25/2014, acc. 04/29/2018 [https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-02-25/52679-](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-02-25/52679-na_politicheskoy_karte_ukrainy_poyavlyayutsya_vse_novye_goryachie_tochki)

[na\\_politicheskoy\\_karte\\_ukrainy\\_poyavlyayutsya\\_vse\\_novye\\_goryachie\\_tochki](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-02-25/52679-na_politicheskoy_karte_ukrainy_poyavlyayutsya_vse_novye_goryachie_tochki)  
<sup>83</sup> Pervy Kanal, 'Supporting action for the Russian language was launched in Ukraine' 02/26/2014, acc. 05/01/2018 [https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-02-26/52729-](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-02-26/52729-na_ukraine_razvernulas_aksiya_v_podderzhku_russkogo_yazyka)  
[na\\_ukraine\\_razvernulas\\_aksiya\\_v\\_podderzhku\\_russkogo\\_yazyka](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-02-26/52729-na_ukraine_razvernulas_aksiya_v_podderzhku_russkogo_yazyka)

<sup>84</sup> Pervy Kanal, 'The Crimean parliament decided to hold a referendum about the autonomous status' 02/27/2014, acc. 02/05/2018 [https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-02-27/52837-](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-02-27/52837-krymskiy_parlament_prinyal_reshenie_provesti_referendum_o_statuse_avtonomii)  
[krymskiy\\_parlament\\_prinyal\\_reshenie\\_provesti\\_referendum\\_o\\_statuse\\_avtonomii](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-02-27/52837-krymskiy_parlament_prinyal_reshenie_provesti_referendum_o_statuse_avtonomii)

showcased. The report shows in detail the clear intentions of self-protection of locals fearing the above mentioned violent groups in the capital, and their conscious preparations to resist provocations, lack of any weapons, even masks, enhancing the peaceful attitude. On the other hand an elderly woman is voiced as well, who complains that she was threatened by a Ukrainian kid with a knife, who told her “You will die here for the sake of Russia, old bone.”<sup>85</sup>

PK often reported on solidarity demonstrations all over Russia, starting from the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March. Russians were supporting the Crimean independence (and evidently its annexation to Russia) with signs saying “Keep holding on brothers”, “We are with you Crimea” and “Crimea is Russia”. At the beginning there were no such massive demonstrations for solidarity with Russians in Eastern Ukraine, however, they also called for a referendum on their independence, and their rights of language use,<sup>86</sup> the reports only referred to the Crimea’s support. Later as the protests continued the reports extended the circle to rally for “all Russian-speakers in Ukraine”<sup>87,88</sup>

The threats lurking to Russian speakers of the Crimea stayed in the news as the referendum’s day approached, and it was even amplified. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of March several reports were on air about anxious locals menaced by armed Ukrainian nationalists who have already arrived on the peninsula.

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid

<sup>86</sup> Pervy Kanal, ‘Actions in support of compatriots in Crimea were held in several cities of Russia’, 03/02/2014, acc.05/02/2018 [https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-02/45035-aktsii\\_v\\_podderzhku\\_sootechestvennikov\\_v\\_krymu\\_proshli\\_v\\_neskolkih\\_gorodah\\_rossii](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-02/45035-aktsii_v_podderzhku_sootechestvennikov_v_krymu_proshli_v_neskolkih_gorodah_rossii)

<sup>87</sup> Pervy Kanal, ‘Thousands of Russians on the streets again to express their solidarity to Russian speaking residents of Ukraine’ 03/12/2014, acc.05/10/2018 [https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-12/45704-tysyachi\\_rossiyan\\_vnov\\_vyshli\\_na\\_ulitsy\\_chtoby\\_vyrazit\\_solidarnost\\_s\\_russkoyazychnymi\\_zhitelyami\\_ukrainy](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-12/45704-tysyachi_rossiyan_vnov_vyshli_na_ulitsy_chtoby_vyrazit_solidarnost_s_russkoyazychnymi_zhitelyami_ukrainy)

<sup>88</sup> Pervy Kanal, ‘Rallies in support of compatriots and the Ukrainian people continued in Russia all week’ 03/10/2014, acc.05/12/2018 [https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-10/45545-mitingi\\_v\\_podderzhku\\_sootechestvennikov\\_i\\_ukrainskogo\\_naroda\\_prodolzhalis\\_v\\_rossii\\_vsyu\\_nedelyu](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-10/45545-mitingi_v_podderzhku_sootechestvennikov_i_ukrainskogo_naroda_prodolzhalis_v_rossii_vsyu_nedelyu)

Extremists of the "Right Sector" and other nationalist groups are already on the peninsula - this is the confirmation: the documents by which the militants passed to the seized mayor's office in Kiev. Knives, pistols, metal bars, gas cartridges and smoke bombs - the arsenal of the Maidan they tried to bring to the Crimea" says the correspondence.<sup>89</sup>

Another report calls the attention to the threat of people's life who wear the St. George ribbon, that is a symbol of Russia's fight against fascism, worn by many.

Spring exacerbation of extremism on the Maidan. There were calls to kill people who wear St. George's ribbons. The symbol of the fight against fascism, concentration camps, a sign of personal courage, heroism and valor - now in Kiev they want to make a target for snipers.<sup>90</sup>

Visibly, the fact that Russians are discriminated and threatened for their Russianness (the St George ribbon being a Russian national symbol after all) is convincingly presented. It echoes one of the key elements of mental appropriation as well. Neither can be questioned the occurrence of the other element, "willingness" as in every report on the Crimea, there are people voicing their support, surrounded by crowds waving Russian flags, screaming "Russia".<sup>91</sup>

Moskovsky Komsomolets, instead of showcasing the fear and the threats facing Russians, they reported on the destruction of a Lenin statue by unknown individuals in the Crimea, and on the outrage it caused.<sup>92</sup> Apparently they did not engage with the narrative of the threats facing Russians, rather with disclosing information on the vandalism damaging an object that represents a historical-cultural value and connection to the Soviet past and grandeur, therefore is it able to produce anger among Russians. As MK covered the news

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<sup>89</sup>Pervy Kanal, 'Residents of Crimea fear provocation, self-defense detainees restricted entry to the peninsula', 03/12/2014, acc.05/13/2018 [https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-12/45677-zhiteli\\_kryma\\_opasayutsya\\_provokatsiy\\_otryady\\_samooborony\\_ogranichili\\_v\\_ezd\\_na\\_poluostrov](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-12/45677-zhiteli_kryma_opasayutsya_provokatsiy_otryady_samooborony_ogranichili_v_ezd_na_poluostrov)

<sup>90</sup>Pervy Kanal, 'On the Ukrainian Maidan they call to kill people who wear St. George ribbons' 03/12/2014, acc.05/13/2018 [https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-12/45696-na\\_ukrainskom\\_maydane\\_zvuchat\\_prizyv\\_ubivat\\_lyudey\\_kotorye\\_nosyat\\_georgievskie\\_lentochki](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-12/45696-na_ukrainskom_maydane_zvuchat_prizyv_ubivat_lyudey_kotorye_nosyat_georgievskie_lentochki)

<sup>91</sup>Pervy Kanal, 'In the Crimea they are preparing for the referendum', 03/12/2014, acc.05/15/2018 [https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-12/45661-v\\_krymu\\_gotoviyatsya\\_k\\_referendumu](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-12/45661-v_krymu_gotoviyatsya_k_referendumu)

<sup>92</sup> Moskovsky Komsomolets, 'In the Crimea the first Lenin monument was torn down' 02/24/2014, acc.05/15/2018 <http://www.mk.ru/social/news/2014/02/24/989340-v-krymu-snesli-pervyy-pamyatnik-leninu.html>



probably with an even more ‘distant’ approach than Dozhd’, it more likely did not engage its audience emotionally, however, in the lack of narrative and contextualization and by occurring embedded contents from PK, apparently its disclosed information did fit well with that of the latter one.<sup>93</sup> Especially as the channel only reported about politicians’ deeds and quoted them exclusively, the audience could reconstruct this part for themselves the easiest way by using the narrative produced by Pervy Kanal. This way even though the channel is quite independent and much less Kremlin-close than the former one, their work contributed to the strengthening of the impact of it. MK reported on the happenings reticently, however, interestingly enough, in their news about snipers shooting into the crowd they embedded a video to the article from PK<sup>94</sup>. They reported on Kharkov residents protecting a Lenin statue, and their country from ‘vandalism and restlessness’<sup>95</sup>. News on the demonstrations in Kharkov were repeatedly reported, but without meaning making and contextualization.<sup>96</sup> Several times though MK used the same wording as Pervy Kanal, only carefully has put them in between quotation marks.<sup>97</sup> It means that by distancing itself from the emotional content of these words and seeming a more high brow media outlet, still keeps them in their place strengthening the connotation between them. As it did not create its own narrative, only a more distant, probably more objective and concise version of news, several times using PK contents embedded, this “passive” sharing of information could fit into the narrative used by the

<sup>93</sup> Moskovsky Komsomolets, ‘The Crimea was blocked by armed people with Russian tricolors on their sleeves’, 02/27/2014, acc.05/15/2018 <http://www.mk.ru/politics/news/2014/02/27/991710-kryim-perekryili-vooruzhennyye-lyudi-s-rossiyskimi-trikolorami-na-rukavah.html>

<sup>94</sup> Moskovsky Komsomolets, ‘In Lugansk they shot on people rallying’ 02/23/2014, acc.05/20/2018 <http://www.mk.ru/incident/news/2014/02/23/989005-v-luganske-rasstrelyali-mitinguyuschih.html>

<sup>95</sup> Moskovsky Komsomolets, ‘Harkov’s citizens do protect the Lenin monument’, 02/23/2014, acc.05/17/2018 <http://www.mk.ru/social/news/2014/02/23/989030-zhiteli-harkova-zaschischayut-pamyatnik-leninu.html>

<sup>96</sup> Moskovsky Komsomolets, ‘The mayor of Kharkiv could not convince the people gathered in the city center to unblock the regional administration’, 02/24/2014, acc.05/18/2018 <http://www.mk.ru/politics/news/2014/02/24/989141-mer-harkova-ne-smog-ubedit-sobravshih-sya-v-tsentre-goroda-razblokirovat-obladministratsiyu.html>

<sup>97</sup> Moskovsky Komsomolets, ‘Mayor of Harkov: March 1 will be a rally in defense of the city’, 02/27/2014, acc.05/18/2018 <http://www.mk.ru/politics/news/2014/02/27/991716-mer-harkova-1-marta-proydet-mnogotyisyachnyy-miting-v-zaschitu-goroda.html>

latter channel, did not cause any dissonance in the audience and supposedly there was a significant overlap between the population reached by MK and PK.

MK's coverage is nearly entirely disclosing dry information, without the construction of any particular narrative, neither that appealing to emotions, nor involving the international perspective of the conflict.<sup>98</sup> As an example, on the 18<sup>th</sup> of February in their news they briefly mention the number of injuries in the protests, and that the mass was in an aggressive mood.<sup>99</sup> In other cases when referring to protesters, they do not use adjectives describing them (unlike Pervy Kanal where "extremist", "neo-nazi", "fascist" are quasi permanently used for their description).<sup>100</sup> Due to the above mentioned reasons it may be assumed, that the audience reading the news of this media outlet was reading also other ones, as generally this does not provide explanation or a wider context to the occasion or act covered, only the short facts, intending to be as objective as possible.

The strongly oppositional Dozhd' however, used a different approach when reporting about the protests. Producing joint materials with BBC Russia, they display a much more 'Westernized' narrative. The central message of the correspondences is concerns about the safety of the protesters, condemning police brutality and the snipers on the roofs. The reports showcase volunteers, emphasizing their selflessness and dedication that manifests in bringing medicines from their homes to the ad-hoc set up medical points, where

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<sup>98</sup> Moskovsky Komsomolets, 'Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine: Statements on power dispersal of "euromaidan" is an information war', 02/27/2014, acc.05/18/2018 <http://www.mk.ru/politics/news/2014/02/07/981863-mvd-ukrainyi-zayavleniya-o-silovom-razgone-evromaydana-eto-informatsionnaya-voyna.html>

<sup>99</sup> Moskovsky Komsomolets, 'Nine people injured during the mass unrests in Kiev', 02/18/2014, acc.04/24/2018 <http://www.mk.ru/politics/news/2014/02/18/986740-devyat-chelovek-stali-zhertvami-massovyih-besporyadkov-v-kieve.html>

<sup>100</sup> Moskovsky Komsomolets, 'Ukrainian parliament banned prosecution of oppositionals', 02/21/2014, acc.05/16/2018 <http://www.mk.ru/politics/sng/news/2014/02/21/988744-ukrainskiy-parlament-zapretil-presledovat-oppozitsionerov.html>

doctors who are also volunteers operate and take care of the injured.<sup>101</sup> Apparently this narrative has nothing in common with the one used by PK that highlighted the discrimination and fear Russians do have to suffer. The channel also asks about the responsibility of Vladimir Putin in creating and aggravating the crisis in Ukraine, that did not even occur in the government friendly media outlet.<sup>102</sup> Nevertheless, as Dozhd' has an incomparably smaller reach than Pervy Kanal (with a reach of 8,1 million of the former to the 50 million of the latter<sup>103</sup>), the leading narrative of the latter presumably had a stronger impact on the popular opinion. Besides the financial and administrative difficulties that Dozhd' had to face (and that Pervy Kanal as being a government-close channel did not), the fact that Dozhd's content is more highbrow than the latter thus targets a smaller audience than PK adds significantly to this difference in popularity and reception.

Referring to double standards as a mean of discrimination against the predominantly Russian population is a repeatedly occurring element of PK's coverage. This concerns Ukraine and the West as well. As the coverage of April 18<sup>th</sup> shows, the central Ukrainian government's measures to de-arm protesters and activist units according to Donetsk residents has only applied to Eastern Ukrainians whereas those in Kiev did not have to get rid of their weapons. In the same coverage Donetsk locals, a man wearing camouflage and three middle-aged women are interviewed where they claim there is no truth, as the Ukrainian government has promised to de-arm the Maidan fighters yet it did not happen,

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<sup>101</sup>Dozhd', 'Where is Ukraine going, is it possible to forecast what will be after Maidan', 02/20/2014, acc.04/13/2018 [https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/bbc\\_na\\_Dozhd'e/kuda\\_idet\\_ukraina\\_mozhno\\_li\\_predskazat\\_chno\\_budet\\_posle\\_majdana-363391/](https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/bbc_na_Dozhd'e/kuda_idet_ukraina_mozhno_li_predskazat_chno_budet_posle_majdana-363391/)

<sup>102</sup>Dozhd', 'British journalists blame Putin for the unrests in Ukraine', 02/25/2018, acc.04/18/2018 [https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/bbc\\_na\\_Dozhd'e/britanskie\\_zhurnalisty\\_obvinjajut\\_putina\\_v\\_besporjadkah\\_na\\_ukraine-363354/](https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/bbc_na_Dozhd'e/britanskie_zhurnalisty_obvinjajut_putina_v_besporjadkah_na_ukraine-363354/)

<sup>103</sup>Media Compass of Calvert Journal(2014)

meanwhile Donetsk people were arrested for having the same amount of weapons.<sup>104</sup>

Eastern Ukrainians were victimized according to the narrative of PK by the West as well that used a double standard and condemned the protests in the region, whereas as the channel mentions, it forgot to do the same during the protests in Western Ukraine.<sup>105</sup>

### **Economic threat**

Being threatened by economic means also appeared regularly in TV, not only in the way detailed above in the section of the incapability of the Ukrainian government to provide its citizens, pensioners and public sphere workers with financial transfers.

In one of the reports, they picture how Crimeans cannot withdraw money from their bank accounts, as a limit was introduced. Nowhere else in the country but on the peninsula. Showcasing locals in despair, shouting and arguing with their bank administrators because they want to take all their money from the bank. They fear that after the referendum they will not be able to reach their own accounts and assets kept in Ukrainian banks any longer, thus this unjust discrimination is presented convincingly as a question of life and death.<sup>106</sup>

Dozhd' also reported on the unpleasant banking situation. The day before the referendum they reported on huge queues at the ATM, and about the uncertainty. Locals get as much money as they can as they are not sure whether they would be able to access their assets

<sup>104</sup> Pervy Kanal, Program 'Time', 21:00, 04/18/2014, acc. 04/18/2018 <https://www.1tv.ru/news/issue/2014-04-18/21:00#1>

<sup>105</sup> Pervy Kanal, 'Experts talk again about double standard in politics related to the Eastern regions of Ukraine', 04/07/2014, acc. 04/18/2018 <https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-04-07/476388>  
eksperty\_vnov\_govoryat\_o\_politike\_dvoynyh\_standartov\_po\_otnosheniyu\_k\_vostochnym\_regionam\_ukrainy

<sup>106</sup> Pervy Kanal, 'Crimean residents can not always access their money', 03/15/2014, acc. 04/29/2018 [https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-15/45922-zhiteli\\_kryma\\_ne\\_vsegda\\_mogut\\_vospolzovatsya\\_svoimi\\_dengami](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-15/45922-zhiteli_kryma_ne_vsegda_mogut_vospolzovatsya_svoimi_dengami)

in the case of the territory joins Russia.<sup>107</sup> However, they do not mention the introduced limits, and do neither present strong emotions nor utter despair, only uncertainty.

Dozhd used a different narrative when covering the events' military aspects though. They reported on the arrival and 'invasion' of the "kind green men" or "little green men" around strategic buildings such as airports already on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February, meanwhile this topic was covered on PK only later and less significantly. Dozhd' in their interviews also refers to the uncertainty of the political circumstances, but it is all very far from the doomsday-like mood presented in the narrative used by Pervy Kanal with the lurking threat to the lives of Russians in the Crimea. In fact, they even qualify the Russian master narrative as propaganda<sup>108</sup>.

In a sharp contrast with the coverage of PK that favors to picture masses, streets and show the happenings in an was appealing and emotionally involving the audience, Dozhd's reports are mostly based on politician's speeches, declarations, the presentation of decisions made. They are regularly dealing especially with what the Western countries reaction to the ongoing Russian intervention<sup>109,110</sup> will be. With their distanced approach, thus covering mostly politicians, analyses and world politics when other media outlets effectively used the flood of emotions, they were not competitive with the master

<sup>107</sup> Dozhd', 'On the referendum's eve, lines queuing to ATMs all over the Crimea' 03/15/2014, acc.04/26/2018

[https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/here\\_and\\_now/nakanune\\_referenduma\\_po\\_vsemu\\_krymu\\_vystroilis\\_ocheredi\\_k\\_bankomatam\\_vkljuchenie\\_timura\\_olevskogo-365088/](https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/here_and_now/nakanune_referenduma_po_vsemu_krymu_vystroilis_ocheredi_k_bankomatam_vkljuchenie_timura_olevskogo-365088/)

<sup>108</sup> Dozhd', 'Former British Ambassador to Russia: a possible intervention would hit Russia painfully', 03/09/2014, acc.05/10/2018.

[https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/bbc\\_na\\_Dozhd'e/byvshij\\_britanskij\\_posol\\_v\\_rossii\\_vozmozhnaja\\_interventsija\\_na\\_ukraine\\_bolno\\_udarit\\_po\\_rossii-364045/](https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/bbc_na_Dozhd'e/byvshij_britanskij_posol_v_rossii_vozmozhnaja_interventsija_na_ukraine_bolno_udarit_po_rossii-364045/)

<sup>109</sup> Dozhd', 'Russia will not ignore the request of Crimea to ensure peace', 03/01/2014, acc.05/10/2018, [https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/novosti\\_sajta/rossija\\_ne\\_ostavit\\_bez\\_vnimanij\\_a\\_prosbu\\_kryma\\_obespechit\\_mir-364074/](https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/novosti_sajta/rossija_ne_ostavit_bez_vnimanij_a_prosbu_kryma_obespechit_mir-364074/)

<sup>110</sup> Dozhd', 'Map of military movements in the Crimea. How the resort peninsula was a step away from the war', 03/01/2014, acc.04/14/2018, [https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/here\\_and\\_now/karta\\_peredvizhenij\\_voennyh\\_po\\_krymu\\_kak\\_kurortnyj\\_poluostrov\\_okazalsja\\_v\\_shage\\_ot\\_vojny-364111/](https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/here_and_now/karta_peredvizhenij_voennyh_po_krymu_kak_kurortnyj_poluostrov_okazalsja_v_shage_ot_vojny-364111/)

narrative. Pervy Kanal, which covered the situation using the key terms of mental appropriation could be a lot more successful in resonating with popular opinion.

On March the 16<sup>th</sup> when the referendum was held, they made a long interview with an independent observer who states there were only minor violations during the voting process, but in general they found everything in order.<sup>111</sup> Besides the euphoria on the Crimean streets<sup>112</sup>, they include reports of Western leaders condemning the referendum<sup>113</sup> and on Ukrainian journalists whose equipments were confiscated by the FSB.<sup>114</sup> It deals with the disenfranchised situation of the “other side”, the Ukrainian media workers who are discriminated now by the Russians for being Ukrainians.

### **Willingness to join Russia**

Pervy Kanal’s narrative enhancing the willingness of people to join Russia reached its peak at the referendum held on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March. The position taken by Russia was often contrasted to the one of Ukraine and the West: Russia supports the right to self-determination of the Crimeans, that is labeled by the West separatism.<sup>115</sup> The news with

<sup>111</sup>Dozhd’, ‘An independent observer about campaigning at a referendum in the Crimea: people themselves hang out Russian flags, nothing can be done about this’, 03/16/2018, acc. 04/20/2018, [https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/here\\_and\\_now/nezavisimyj\\_nabljudatel\\_ob\\_agitatsii\\_na\\_referendume\\_v\\_krymu\\_1\\_judi\\_sami\\_vyveshivajut\\_rossijskie\\_flagi\\_s\\_etim\\_nichego\\_nelzja\\_sdelat-365132/](https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/here_and_now/nezavisimyj_nabljudatel_ob_agitatsii_na_referendume_v_krymu_1_judi_sami_vyveshivajut_rossijskie_flagi_s_etim_nichego_nelzja_sdelat-365132/)

<sup>112</sup> Dozhd’, ‘Head of the Crimean Parliament Vladimir Konstantinov: “In the Crimea, a phenomenal emotional upsurge, I have never seen such a thing”’, 03/17/2018, acc. 04/29/2018, at [https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/here\\_and\\_now/glava\\_parlamenta\\_kryma\\_v\\_krymu\\_takoj\\_emotsionalnyj\\_podem\\_ja\\_takogo\\_nikogda\\_ne\\_videl-365181/](https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/here_and_now/glava_parlamenta_kryma_v_krymu_takoj_emotsionalnyj_podem_ja_takogo_nikogda_ne_videl-365181/)

<sup>113</sup>Dozhd’, ‘“The Crimean referendum will never be recognized by the US and the international community.” How the world reacted to the annexation of the Crimea to Russia’, 03/17/2014, acc. 05/21/2018, [https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/here\\_and\\_now/krymskij\\_referendum\\_nikogda\\_ne\\_budet\\_priznan\\_ssha\\_i\\_mezhdunarodnym\\_soobshchestvom\\_kak\\_v\\_mire\\_otreagirovali\\_na\\_prisoedinenie\\_kryma\\_k\\_rossii-365149/](https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/here_and_now/krymskij_referendum_nikogda_ne_budet_priznan_ssha_i_mezhdunarodnym_soobshchestvom_kak_v_mire_otreagirovali_na_prisoedinenie_kryma_k_rossii-365149/)

<sup>114</sup>Dozhd’, ‘“Dear FSB, return our equipment.” Ukrainian journalist on the difficulties of referendum coverage and missing colleagues in Crimea’, 03/17/2018, acc. 05/12/2018, [https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/here\\_and\\_now/uvazhaemaja\\_fsb\\_vernite\\_nashu\\_apparaturu\\_ukrainskaja\\_zhurnal\\_istka\\_o\\_trudnostjah\\_osveschenija\\_referenduma\\_i\\_propavshih\\_kollegah\\_v\\_krymu-365179/](https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/here_and_now/uvazhaemaja_fsb_vernite_nashu_apparaturu_ukrainskaja_zhurnal_istka_o_trudnostjah_osveschenija_referenduma_i_propavshih_kollegah_v_krymu-365179/)

<sup>115</sup>Pervy Kanal, ‘Crimea made a declaration of independency and chooses its own future on the referendum’, 03/16/2014, acc. 04/28/2018, [https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-16/45964-krym\\_prinyal\\_deklaratsiyu\\_nezavisimosti\\_i\\_vybiraet\\_svoe\\_budushee\\_na\\_referendume](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-16/45964-krym_prinyal_deklaratsiyu_nezavisimosti_i_vybiraet_svoe_budushee_na_referendume)

overwhelming enthusiasm reported on the fact that during the referendum everything was in order, that the citizens were unusually active in collecting information about the options to be voted. Several locals were interviewed who declared their willingness to join Russia so that they would receive pension and that they could walk the streets without fear. "We want to live a good life so that pensioners get a decent pension, so that the children have a good education, so that we are not afraid to walk the streets, because as you look in Kiev it's just a wild horror" said a resident of Kerch. Here the narrative of fear of being discriminated for being Russian appears again. To demonstrate that not only the ethnic Russian population voted for joining Russia, the report includes interviews with Bakhchisaray's ethnic Tatar voters, who also found Russia a more cultural, stable and prosperous country therefore voted for the annexation<sup>116</sup>. To highlight the celebratory atmosphere, it is mentioned that locals greeted each other in Sevastopol with the formula 'S prazdnikom' 'To the celebration'. "Today is a celebration, a celebration for all of us, a holiday of the return of the Crimea to Russia. This is the reunion of the Russian spirit, the Russian world" said a local citizen, Svetlana Ivashova. Since other residents even in hospitals wanted to vote, the urns were taken to them that they were overwhelmingly happy about. Becoming a Russian citizen has brought nostalgic feelings for many, providing them with the sentiment of belonging to a great power: "There are no words. Only the feeling that we became citizens of an enormous, huge country... that cares about the people. We were waiting for it very much" says a local citizen in the report on how Crimeans apply for Russian passports. In the same report elderly women are crying of happiness : "I did not even imagine a month ago, but my friend said that I hope that we will live in Russia.(...) And it came true. Yes". "And they say that we are at the barrel of a pistol, that's what we're crying for ... From the barrel

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<sup>116</sup>Pervy Kanal,'International observers noted the excellent organization of the Crimean referendum',03/16/2014,acc.05/15/2018,[https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-16/45980-mezhdunarodnye\\_nablyudateli\\_otmetili\\_prekrasnuyu\\_organizatsiyu\\_referenduma\\_v\\_krymu](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-16/45980-mezhdunarodnye_nablyudateli_otmetili_prekrasnuyu_organizatsiyu_referenduma_v_krymu)

of the pistol, under which we're going ... Well, you that ... It's really true joy" added another resident of Kerch.<sup>117</sup>

It is crystal clear that the narrative by Pervy Kanal framed the conflict based on the same two things as in the case of the mental appropriation of Siberia used by Claudia Weiss. Russians in the Crimea are suffering and threatened for their Russianness (therefore they suffer for Russians), and they by their own will want to join Russia, the state that can protect them from the Ukrainian government and its 'fascist supporters'. This has become a master narrative, as the threat of the arrival of Kiev-based ultra-nationalists has become a repeatedly appearing, organic element of the reports.<sup>118</sup>

### **Active agency or passive waiting- response to the threat**

Even though the narrative used by PK for the threats to the Russian population of the two regions was undoubtedly similar from the beginning, there were some significant differences as well. Notably how actively or passively the crowds responded to them, thus were they acting as their own agents, or were deprived from their agency according to the narrative, thus did they wait for the arrival of a stronger, greater patron. This difference does not root in the different reasons of the protests as the crowds were on the streets for very similar reasons. Both in the Crimea and in Donetsk desperate Russians are shown, protesting for their language rights in front of the local government<sup>119</sup> showcasing their fear of the arrival of the 'Euromaidan fascists' thus protesting against their deprivation of

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<sup>117</sup>Pervy Kanal, 'Sevastopol residents actively take part in the referendum about the Crimea and their hometown', 03/16/2014, acc.05/05/2018, [https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-16/45956-zhiteli\\_sevastopolya\\_aktivno\\_uchastvuyut\\_v\\_referendume\\_o\\_statuse\\_kryma\\_i\\_rodного\\_goroda](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-16/45956-zhiteli_sevastopolya_aktivno_uchastvuyut_v_referendume_o_statuse_kryma_i_rodного_goroda)

<sup>118</sup>Pervy Kanal, 'In Kiev about various threats against the rebellious Crimea, busy rearrangements', 03/10/2014, acc.05/05/2018, [https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-10/45540-v\\_kieve\\_pomimo\\_raznoobraznyh\\_ugroz\\_v\\_adres\\_myatezhnogo\\_kryma\\_zanyaty\\_perestankami](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-10/45540-v_kieve_pomimo_raznoobraznyh_ugroz_v_adres_myatezhnogo_kryma_zanyaty_perestankami)

<sup>119</sup>Pervy Kanal, 'In Donetsk the supporters of national governor rally', 03/05/2014, acc.05/05/2018, [https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-05/45250-v\\_donetske\\_mitinguyut\\_storonniki\\_narodnogo\\_gubernatora](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-05/45250-v_donetske_mitinguyut_storonniki_narodnogo_gubernatora)



right to security and use of mother tongue.<sup>120</sup> However, the level of agency that appears in the two territories differs tremendously.

### **Active agency of the Donbas**

Framing the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, Pervy Kanal refers to a freedom fight that escalated to the physical level too. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of May, a correspondence comes out reporting on the violent clashes of demonstrators with radicals in Kharkiv with 97 injured. The mayor of the city said that extremists threw explosive elements, possibly even grenades, into public transport. Local residents have beaten the supporters of the Maidan out of the seized building of the regional administration, the police did not intervene.<sup>121</sup> The report refers to a similar situation in Donetsk, where the city council refused to recognize the legitimate new power in Kiev, the deputies decided to consider the Russian language official on a par with the Ukrainian and demanded a referendum on the fate of the Donbas. Mass violence is shown, large crowds of protesters throwing stones, bricks and other objects on administrative buildings. Weapons and shouting men dressed in camouflage. It is a real siege. Given its violent nature, there are no women visible in this crowd, but mostly strong, angry men. Giving voice to an activist with a heavily bleeding head, Sergei Kuz who summarizes: "'We need to protect our land from newcomers.' As Alexander Nevsky said, whoever comes to us with the sword will die by the sword, and we will decide how to elect our power through elections." <sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Pervy Kanal, 'New protest rallies in the key eastern regions of Ukraine: Donetsk and Kharkov', 03/08/2014, acc.05/05/2018, [https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-08/45470-novye\\_mitingi\\_protesta\\_v\\_klyuchevyh\\_dlya\\_ekonomiki\\_ukrainy\\_vostochnyh\\_regionah\\_donetske\\_i\\_harkove](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-08/45470-novye_mitingi_protesta_v_klyuchevyh_dlya_ekonomiki_ukrainy_vostochnyh_regionah_donetske_i_harkove)

<sup>121</sup> Pervy Kanal, 'On the South-East Ukraine a series of rallies against the Kievan power happened', 03/01/2014, acc.05/05/2018, [https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-01/44975-na\\_yugo\\_vostoke\\_ukrainy\\_proshla\\_seriya\\_mitingov\\_protiv\\_novoy\\_vlasti\\_v\\_kieve](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-01/44975-na_yugo_vostoke_ukrainy_proshla_seriya_mitingov_protiv_novoy_vlasti_v_kieve)

<sup>122</sup> Pervy Kanal, 'Ukraine's Eastern regions declare the illegitimacy of new Kievan authorities', 03/01/2014, acc.05/05/2018, [https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-01/44983-vostochnye\\_rayony\\_ukrainy\\_zayavlyayut\\_o\\_nelegitimnosti\\_novyh\\_kievskih\\_vlastey](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-01/44983-vostochnye_rayony_ukrainy_zayavlyayut_o_nelegitimnosti_novyh_kievskih_vlastey)

Apparently, Eastern Ukrainians are pictured as being able to fight for themselves, to represent their own interests and act on their own behalf shall it also include physical violence or self-defense. This can be in context with the strong presence of organized crime groups in the region addressed above<sup>123</sup> that took the opportunity to fill the perceived power vacuum left by the Ukrainian government as well. Even when later on in the conflict (already referred even by Pervy Kanal as war) deaths and serious grievances and are covered, the overall narrative supposes that the Donbas is able to defend itself, it does not need Russia as a ‘savior’, the possibility of a Russian intervention, let alone the Russia’s responsibility to openly engage in the conflict seems to be vanished from the possible options.<sup>124, 125</sup>

All over this belligerent attitude and the framing putting the physically violent aspect of the conflict to the front, could on the one hand convince Russians that Donetsk is able to protect itself, on the other hand effectively deter the popular opinion from thinking positively about annexing such a chaotic place.

### **Passive Crimea**

Pervy Kanal’s narrative presented Eastern Ukrainian protesters repeatedly as being violent themselves as well, whereas in the case of Crimea predominantly peaceful protesters were shown, and everyday locals worrying about oppression and the future arrival of neo-nazis to the Crimea is voiced, as the program aired on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March.<sup>126</sup> Their peaceful behavior and lack of weapons is often highlighted as in the following example by the correspondent:

<sup>123</sup> See the section: ‘Inability of the Ukrainian government’

<sup>124</sup> Pervy Kanal, Program ‘Time’, 06/18/2018, acc.05/30/2018, <https://www.1tv.ru/news/issue/2014-06-18/21:00#1>

<sup>125</sup> Pervy Kanal, ‘Sunday Time’.21:00, 06/29/2014, acc.05/30/2018, <https://www.1tv.ru/news/issue/2014-06-29/21:00#1>

<sup>126</sup> Pervy Kanal, ‘News from Ukrainian regions resemble reports from the front’, 03/02/2014, acc.05/05/2018, [https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-02/45018-novosti\\_iz\\_ukrainskih\\_regionov\\_napominayut\\_svodki\\_s\\_fronta](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-02/45018-novosti_iz_ukrainskih_regionov_napominayut_svodki_s_fronta)

In general, the situation is calm, if I may say so, without any excesses. Self-defense units without masks, with open faces, and also without weapons. They do not have any clubs, shields, and they say it in principle. People are also without masks, so that there are no provocations.<sup>127</sup>

As a contrast to the violent Donbas protests where predominantly men are showcased in the violent crowd, in the Crimea not only the violence of the protesters is lacking, but often women, especially elderly women are interviewed. Crimean residents repeatedly refer to their desire for Russia's intervention, so that a "bigger, better patron" would "take care" about them. This feature is extremely present in the coverage of PK when reporting about the celebration of the referendum. As quoted above<sup>128</sup>, showcasing elderly women, crying from happiness saying reinforces this: "There are no words. Only the feeling that we became citizens of an enormous, huge country...that cares about the people. We were waiting for it very much."<sup>129</sup> The words she uses refer primarily to a passive role, a passive hoping that the "enormous, huge country", "that cares about the people" will solve their problems, and it appears as a savior and protects the territory from the threats menacing it and its people.

Whereas Eastern Ukrainians are clearly presented as agents of their own, the coverage effectively deprives the Crimea from its active agency, and effectively makes them *nashi*, 'ours' in the eyes of Russians from Russia, i.e. "part of us, but a subordinate and passive part". This is exactly the power relation that Weiss explored in the case of Siberia.<sup>130</sup> They are viewed as 'ours' but not 'us'.

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<sup>127</sup>The Crimean parliament decided to hold a referendum about the autonomous status' 02/27/2014, acc.02/05/2018, <https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-02-27/52837-krymskiy-parlament-prinyal-reshenie-provesti-referendum-o-statuse-avtonomii>

<sup>128</sup> See the "Willingness to join Russia" section

<sup>129</sup>'Sevastopol residents actively take part in the referendum about the Crimea and their hometown', 03/16/2014, acc.05/05/2018, <https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-16/45956-zhiteli-sevastopolya-aktivno-uchastvuyut-v-referendume-o-statuse-kryma-i-rodnogo-goroda>

<sup>130</sup> Claudia Weiss: Representing the Empire, see the First Chapter's Framework section

Putin in his speech greeting the results of the referendum also reinforced the passive role of the peninsula: “Now, many years later [after the dissolution of the Soviet Union] I heard residents of Crimea say that back in 1991 they were handed over like a sack of potatoes. This is hard to disagree with.”<sup>131</sup> This wording emphasizes the Crimea’s passive role in the flow of events and a lack of active agency, therefore fits excellently into the narrative used by Pervy Canal. However, not only into that, as neither the oppositional Dozhd’ framed the Crimean’s participation in the opposite way. In fact Dozhd’ has nearly entirely left the Crimean’s will or voice out of the picture as they were primarily concerned about the level of international politics, especially about the reactions of the West, the foreseeable decline of Russia-West relations and so on. They also pay special attention to the reactions of the West, declarations, promises and menaces from European and American politicians.<sup>132</sup> The channel published an interview with Natalia Akindinova, the director of the Institute for Development of the Higher School of Economics who said: “Crimea is a megaproject like the Olympics, and an opportunity for someone to earn a lot in a short time”<sup>133</sup>. Here a reference to the lack of active agency of the Crimea is visible, as the territory (and its population) is pictured as the subject someone may make a profit from, not an active actor. Other opinions voiced also found the chain of event worrisome, and more of a political and economical gambling than a “home coming”, a frequently used formula of Pervy Kanal.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Putin, Address by President of the Russian Federation.

<sup>132</sup> Dozhd’, ‘How effective and painful will the US sanctions against representatives of the Russian elite because of the Crimea’, 03/17/2014, acc.05/05/2018 [https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/here\\_and\\_now/naskolko\\_dejstvennymi\\_i\\_bol\\_eznennymi\\_okazhutsja\\_sanktsii\\_ssha\\_protiv\\_predstavitelej\\_rossijskoj\\_elity\\_iz\\_za\\_kryma-365207/](https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/here_and_now/naskolko_dejstvennymi_i_bol_eznennymi_okazhutsja_sanktsii_ssha_protiv_predstavitelej_rossijskoj_elity_iz_za_kryma-365207/)

<sup>133</sup> Dozhd’, ‘Natalia Akindinova: The Crimea is a mega-project like the Olympics and an opportunity for someone to earn in a short time’, 03/17/2018, acc.05/05/2018, [https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/here\\_and\\_now/natalja\\_akindinova\\_krym\\_eto\\_m\\_egaproekt\\_tipa\\_olimpiady\\_i\\_vozmozhnost\\_dlja\\_kogo\\_to\\_zarabotat\\_v\\_korotkie\\_sroki-365212/](https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/here_and_now/natalja_akindinova_krym_eto_m_egaproekt_tipa_olimpiady_i_vozmozhnost_dlja_kogo_to_zarabotat_v_korotkie_sroki-365212/)

<sup>134</sup> Dozhd’, ‘Analyst Igor Nikolayev: the stock exchanges have not yet understood how Russia will be punished for the Crimea, so they are growing, but this is temporary’, 03/17/2014, acc.05/05/2018, [https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/here\\_and\\_now/analitik\\_igor\\_nikolaev\\_bir\\_zhi\\_esche\\_ne\\_ponjali\\_kak\\_rossiju\\_nakazhut\\_za\\_krym\\_poetomu\\_rastut\\_no\\_eto\\_vremenno-365151/](https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/here_and_now/analitik_igor_nikolaev_bir_zhi_esche_ne_ponjali_kak_rossiju_nakazhut_za_krym_poetomu_rastut_no_eto_vremenno-365151/)

## Cultural connection enhanced

Pervy Kanal reported on a petition signed by many famous people on the website of the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, supporting the Crimean autonomy.

*Crimea cannot be torn from Russia, Crimea is Chekhov, Crimea is Pushkin, Crimea is Sevastopol, and when instead of a monument to Nakhimov a monument to Bandera is erected, I am against it(...)I understand our President who does not want to allow this and wants to return the Crimea, which has always belonged to Russia.*<sup>135</sup> (*italics added*)

said the film director Vladimir Bortko. His references to the Crimea's relation to Russian cultural heritage and literature underpins that the mental appropriation of the Crimea resulted in a strong bond between the territory and the people. It is visible that he equates Crimea with the city that is the most important for its cultural-historical role for Russia. It is unquestionably presented as a Russian territory. From the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March Pervy Kanal started to air a short video about the history of the Crimea. The main motifs of it are exoticizing its beauty and the Russian-Soviet imperial holiday resort features, presenting it as an important element of the imperial glory. The hidden reasons of Hrushchov's act of presenting the peninsula to Ukraine are also discussed, treating it obviously as a betrayal, playing dramatic music in the background for completing the effect. Its main message is that the Crimea's rightful possessor might undoubtedly be only Russia.<sup>136</sup> It is visible that this these contents built entirely on the historical wave of mental appropriation, studied in the second chapter. The same cultural and historical motives appear that this strong mental connection was based on. There were no similar contents aired related to the Donbas.

<sup>135</sup>Pervy Kanal,'The position of the President of Russia on the situation in Crimea and Ukraine was supported by cultural figures ',03/12/2014,acc.05/05/2018,[https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-12/45705-pozitsiyu\\_prezidenta\\_rossii\\_po\\_situatsii\\_v\\_krymu\\_i\\_na\\_ukraine\\_podderzhali\\_deyateli\\_kultury](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-12/45705-pozitsiyu_prezidenta_rossii_po_situatsii_v_krymu_i_na_ukraine_podderzhali_deyateli_kultury)

<sup>136</sup> Pervy Kanal,'The question "whose land is here" for the Crimea is a long story',03/02/2014,acc.05/05/2018,[https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-02/45021-vopros\\_chya\\_zdes\\_zemlya\\_dlya\\_kryma\\_istoriya\\_davnyaya](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2014-03-02/45021-vopros_chya_zdes_zemlya_dlya_kryma_istoriya_davnyaya)

## Conclusion

This chapter argued that there was a second wave of mental appropriation for Russians concerning the Crimea that did not happen to that extent in Eastern Ukraine. This wave was traced through the coverage of the Ukrainian Crisis from February 2014 of three media outlets. The narrative used by Pervy Kanal, the incomparably most watched channel was based on the same elements that Weiss described in the case of mental appropriation of Siberia: a combination of representation and a cult of suffering: “they represent us, and they suffer for their Russianness, therefore they suffer for us”, and the willingness to join Russia (or earlier the Empire) that leads to a relatively bloodless expansion (however, this is mostly the matter of representation). The narrative was built up on threats facing Russians both in the Crimea and in the Donbas. Their sufferings were presented in various ways and levels. Their willingness to join Russia was also inevitably presented. However, while the Donbas was pictured as an active agent on its own behalf with violence showcased from the side of protesters as well, it was perceived as ‘it can defend itself’. On the other hand the Crimea was predominantly covered as a peaceful, passive territory that seeks for Russia’s help as it cannot defend itself and its people. This differentiation has also contributed to the stronger mental appropriation of the Crimea, resulting in the same subordinated position of the peninsula in the power relations, that Siberia received in Weiss’ understanding. It’s unquestionably *nash*, ‘ours’, and the popularity of the word *Krymnash*, ‘the Crimea is ours’ in 2014 shows it very well.<sup>137</sup> But being *nash* is not the equivalent of being us.

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<sup>137</sup>Novoselova, “Experts chose the word of the year”(2014)

## Conclusion

The Crimea was mentally appropriated by Russians much more strongly than Eastern Ukraine ever was. This happened due to the different character of the two regions, but not only; history also played an important role in the stronger connection to the Crimea than to the Donbas. This difference is easily traceable in the Russian literature. The main levels of this strong connection the Crimea follow Charron: exoticism of the Crimea that turned from being viewed as ‘the mysterious East’ into ‘our summer house’, and the Sevastopol myth. On the other hand, the Donbas did not offer such points due to its being an industrial territory.

This difference occurred in the Russians’ reaction in the Ukrainian conflict of 2014. Even though Russian media mostly used a very similar narrative for the situation of the Crimea and for that of Eastern Ukraine from the beginning, that narrative was based primarily on the two elements described by Weiss regarding the mental appropriation of Siberia: “Russians are our brothers in the Crimea, they suffer for their Russianness, therefore they represent us” and “there is no bloodshed and it is basically not even a war, it is they themselves who want to join Russia”.

From the beginning of February, even before the intervention’s start in the Crimea, the main narrative used by Pervy Kanal concerning both the Eastern Ukrainian region and the Crimea was based on the threat and discrimination facing Russians, and the willingness of the regions’ population to join Russia. However, even though the main narrative applied was similar, in the Crimea’s case the historic and cultural importance was often referred to that could resonate very well due to an earlier mental appropriation of the peninsula. Notwithstanding, the cultural importance of the Crimea (described in detail in the second chapter) was displayed as well by Pervy Kanal during the recent amplification, it also

demonstrates that in the case of Crimea there were “mental stocks” to reach and that resonated extremely well with the Russian popular opinion.

On the other hand, aggression was displayed in Eastern Ukraine but not in the Crimea, which could easily prevent Russians from thinking the annexation of the territory would be beneficial, especially since the mental connection to this region was significantly weaker due to historical reasons. The Eastern Ukrainian situation was pictured as a freedom fight with aggression from both sides (meanwhile Crimean protesters were highlighted as peaceful) from the beginning of the riots and the situation is more ‘troubled’ and chaotic. This fact plus the lack of prior mental appropriation were already enough for the Russian popular opinion to not be supportive of the idea of annexing the Donbas.

Whereas Eastern Ukraine was pictured as having an active agency that can defend itself and its interests, the Crimea was shown to be the opposite. The Crimea’s passive waiting, peaceful protests according to the narrative deprived this region of the role of having an active agency, highlighting that they could only count on Russia. This way the Crimea became *nash*, ‘ours’ that is a subordinated position, but suggests a very strong possessive relation. This is mental appropriation.

The findings of this thesis suggest that in order to understand possible Russian interventions abroad in the future, among other factors the prior mental appropriation of the given territory should be studied. If this prior mental appropriation had happened, it may result a strong social support for foreign policies driven by expansionist pursuits, even annexation. Since the government may consider this social support when shaping foreign interventions, it is tremendously important to explore what a given territory means for the Russian popular opinion, and how strongly was it mentally appropriated.





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