

CHARLES UNIVERSITY

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Institute of International Studies

Department of Russian and East European Studies

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Ivan Krupskyi

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**Russia in the Ukrainian governmental discourse:
From Crimea to Minsk II**

Master's thesis

Author: Ivan Krupskyi

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Supervisor: PhDr. Jan Šír, Ph.D.

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Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
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In Prague on 11.05.2018

Ivan Krupskyi

References

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Abstract

Since 2014, the increased interest of academia to the Ukrainian-Russian relations was reflected in the growing number of publications on this problematics. In spite of this fact, there still exists a research gap on representations of Russia in Ukrainian discourses, which are often taken as self-obvious. This in turn may lead to incomplete understanding of Ukrainian policies towards Russia. The specific aim of this work is to provide an additional instrument for understanding Ukraine's foreign policy towards Russia. In order to provide an insight into the way the Ukrainian government perceived Russia, discourse analysis of chosen articulations was conducted. As this work demonstrates, the central element of representations of Russia in the Ukrainian governmental discourse were systematic attempts to delegitimize the Russian foreign policy towards Ukraine through undermining legitimacy of the Russian leadership. This was done in a number of ways: the discourse actively used historical dimension and constructed categorization of good and bad periods of Ukrainian-Russian relations, characterized Russia as archaic, non-civilized and aggressive, and separated Russian political elites from Russian citizens, thereby undermining internal legitimacy of the current Russian regime. At the same time, the discourse did not promote unconditional antagonism towards Russia and argued that the return to normal relations between the two states was possible.

Abstrakt

Od roku 2014 se zvýšený zájem akademické obce o ukrajinsko-ruské vztahy odrazil v rostoucím počtu publikací na tuto problematiku. Navzdory této skutečnosti stále existuje výzkumná mezera ohledně zobrazení Ruska v ukrajinských diskurzích, které je často považováno za samozřejmé. To může vést k neúplnému pochopení ukrajinské politiky vůči Rusku. Specifickým cílem této práce je poskytnout další nástroj pro pochopení zahraniční politiky Ukrajiny vůči Rusku. Pro nahlédnutí na způsob, jakým ukrajinská vláda vnímala Rusko, byla provedena diskurzivní analýza vybraných článků. Jak ukazuje tato práce, ústředním prvkem zastoupení Ruska v ukrajinském vládním diskursu byly systematické pokusy delegitimizovat ruskou zahraniční politiku vůči Ukrajině prostřednictvím útočení na legitimitu ruského vedení. Bylo provedeno mnoha způsoby: diskurz aktivně využíval historickou dimenzi, vybudoval kategorizaci dobrých a špatných období ukrajinsko-ruských

vztahů, charakterizoval Rusko jako archaické, necivilizované a agresivní a odděloval ruské politické elity od ruských občanů, čímž podkopával vnitřní legitimitu současného ruského režimu. Zároveň diskurz neprosazoval nepodmíněný antagonismus vůči Rusku a tvrdil, že návrat k normálním vztahům mezi oběma státy je možný.

Keywords

Russia, Ukraine, discourse analysis, poststructuralism

Klíčová slova

Rusko, Ukrajina, diskursivní analýza, poststrukturalismus

Název práce

Rusko v ukrajinském vládním diskurzu: od Krymu po Minsk II

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1. Introduction

The point of departure for this work is the increased interest of academia in the Ukrainian-Russian relations, determined by their deteriorating state and the consequences thereof for the world politics. The annexation of Crimea and start of the war in Donbas are now among the crucial events of the 21st century in the Eastern European and arguably world arena. Their importance was defined by the scale of consequences of the Russia's aggression against Ukraine. It spread far beyond the scope of private Ukrainian-Russian problems and became debated around the globe. The imposition and subsequent prolongation of sanctions against Russia by numerous states was among the many signs that demonstrated the world's concern about the Russian aggression against Ukraine despite at first glance those stated did not seem to be directly affected.

Academia did not stay out of the debate on Ukraine and Russia, as the situation presented a number of research gaps that needed to be filled. Positivist approaches formed the core of debate, and scholars largely focused topics such as international security (including nuclear security), energy, strategic partnership, international law, nationalism and authoritarianism – this was true for most publications in English, German and Czech.¹ At the same time, some literature on the Ukrainian-Russian relations with the use of non-positivist methods was produced in English and German. However, it mostly focused on representations of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia in various countries or conducted analysis on strictly either Russia or Ukraine (without the consideration of relations between the two states).² Another rather extensive strand of research was closer to the topic of this

¹ GOLDTHAU, A., and BOERSMA, T. (2014): The 2014 Ukraine-Russia crisis: Implications for energy markets and scholarship. *Energy Research & Social Science* (3), September 2014, pp. 13-15; KOSTANYAN, H., and MEISTER, S. (2016): *Ukraine, Russia and the EU: Breaking the deadlock in the Minsk Process. CEPS Working Document No. 423/June 2016*; MOORE, R. R.; COLETTA, D. (Eds.) (2017): *NATO's Return to Europe: Engaging Ukraine, Russia, and Beyond*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press; ŠÍR, J. a kol. (2017): *Ruská agrese proti Ukrajině*. Prague: Nakladatelství Karolinum; KRATOCHVÍL, P., FJODOROV, J., NAJŠLOVÁ, L., and SVOBODA, K. (2014): *Ukrajinská krize: Dopady a rizika pro Českou republiku*. Prague: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů. <http://www.dokumenty-iir.cz/DiscussionPapers/Ukrajina.pdf>; KRATOCHVÍL, P. (2014): Rusko a východní sousedství EU. In: O. DITRYCH a kol.: *Scénáře vývoje mezinárodního bezpečnostního prostředí (2020)*. Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, pp. 38-48.

² MIKOŁAJCZAK, A. (2016): *Text-Bild-Beziehungen am Beispiel des Mediendiskurses über den Ukraine-Konflikt*. Łódź: Wydawnictwo UŁ. http://dspace.uni.lodz.pl/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11089/18432/6-071_082-Mikołajczak.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y; GOLCZEWSKI, F. (2016): Die Ukraine als (erfolgreiches?) Nationsbildungsprojekt. *Neue Folge* 64 (4) (2016), pp. 640-645; WEISS, D. (2018): Implizite

work, but focused mostly on the Russian perspective of the Ukrainian-Russian relations (especially in Russian media).³ In this way, representations of Russia and the relations between the two states from the perspective of Ukrainian discourses have remained an underresearched topic. In general, studies of discourses are misbalanced towards Russia in terms of focus.

Analysis of the representations of Russia and Ukrainian-Russian relations in Ukrainian discourses is needed for several reasons. Firstly, from the point of view of non-positivist research, the lack of knowledge on how Russia is represented in Ukrainian discourses does not enable seeing the whole picture of relations between the two states due to the aforementioned misbalance in topic choosing. Secondly, there exist a number of stereotypes and implicit expectations on how Russia is represented in major Ukrainian discourses. Relying on these undocumented hypotheses may lead to misinterpretation of Ukrainian policies towards Russia. Thirdly, another consequence of this reliance on unproved hypotheses may be oversimplification or wrong understanding of how Ukrainians define their identity against Russians, which is of great significance for contemporary Ukrainian identity-making.

This work thus aims at filling this still existing research gap. In order to fulfil the task, discourse analysis of articulations referring to Russia is conducted. The focus is put on representations of Russia in the Ukrainian governmental discourse. Researching precisely this discourse provides an additional instrument for understanding foreign policy of Ukraine

Argumentation im Politischen Diskurs: Metaphern, Vergleiche, intertextuelle Verweise, in A.MEYER and L. REINKOWSKI (Eds.) (2018): *Im Rhythmus der Linguistik. Festschrift für Sebastian Kempgen zum 65. Geburtstag*. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press; GRAEF, A. (2017). Wer macht Außenpolitik in Russland? Akteure, Diskurse, Entscheidungen, *ZFAS* 10 (1), <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12399-016-0601-1>, pp. 1-11

³ ELGSTRÖM, O., CHABAN, N., KNOTT, M., MÜLLER, P., and PARDO, S. (2018). Perceptions of the EU's Role in the Ukraine-Russia and the Israel-Palestine Conflicts::A Biased Mediator? *International Negotiation* 23 (2); PIKULICKA-WILCZEWSKA, A., and SAKWA, R. (2015): Ukraine and Russia: People, Politics, Propaganda and Perspectives. *E-International Relations*. <https://www.e-ir.info/2015/03/06/edited-collection-ukraine-and-russia-people-politics-propaganda-perspectives/>; RIABOVA, T., AND RIABOV, O. (2015): Gendered Aspects of the Hegemonic Russian Media Discourse on the Ukrainian Crisis, *JSPP* 1 (1). Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, pp. 83-108; GAUFMAN, E. (2015): Memory, Media, and Securitization: Russian Media Framing of the Ukrainian Crisis, *JSPP* 1 (1), Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, pp. 141-174; GAUFMAN, E. (2016): *Security Threats and Public Perception: Digital Russia and the Ukraine Crisis*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan

towards Russia. The work analyses the period of the first stage of the Russian aggression against Ukraine: from the beginning of the annexation of Crimea until the Second Minsk Agreement (or Minsk II), thus covering the Ukrainian governmental discourse since late February 2014 till mid-February 2015. Precisely this period is of great interest due to the resonant changes that took place in the Ukrainian-Russian relations. This allowed exploring the reaction of the Ukrainian governmental discourse on these changes and therefore discursive dynamics.

As this work demonstrates, articulations on Russia do not allow for easy division of the Ukrainian governmental discourse into separate subdiscourses. The discourse demonstrated high consistency due to a low number of statements contradictory to each other. The image of Russia produced was monolithic and solid. The Ukrainian governmental discourse delegitimized Russian policy against Ukraine in several ways. Firstly, it questioned legitimacy of Russian leadership as representing Russian population by splitting the concept of Russia into *elites* and *common citizens* and contrasting their attitudes towards Ukraine. Secondly, it argued that Russian leadership misperceived the real national interest of the Russian Federation and consequently pursued a wrong policy towards Ukraine. Thirdly, the Ukrainian governmental discourse actively used historical dimension of construction of the concepts *Ukraine* and *Russia* in order to demonstrate a great degree of historical continuity between various state and non-state formations that were considered predecessors of Ukraine and Russia. Finally, the Ukrainian governmental discourse constructed the understanding of *good period of relations* between Ukraine and Russia, characterizing years 1991-2014 in such way in order to accuse the Russian authorities in ruining the *formerly good relation* between the states.

The work proceeds as the following. The part on theoretical and methodological considerations elaborates on the respective frameworks based on the theory of poststructuralism and understanding of discourse, tailored to the research aims of this work. The following chapter constitutes the very analysis. It starts proceeds with historical dimension and that demonstrates how the Ukrainian governmental discourse conceptualized the pre-1991 Ukrainian-Russian relations and used these conceptualizations for framing current images of Russia. The following subchapter analyzes how Russia during the period

between 1991 and 2014 was represented in the Ukrainian governmental discourse. After this, crucial characteristics of Russia's representations are analyzed in more details. The analysis is finished by looking at which actors stand behind the concept of Russia. Conclusion, then, summarizes the main findings of the work.

2. Theoretical and methodological considerations

The theoretical part of this work is based on poststructuralism, a theory that became a part of the social sciences in the 1980s and gained a lot of influence over Anglo-Saxon science in the same decade.⁴ Poststructuralists were to a great extent influenced by social and philosophical theory from the 1970s and brought a critical perspective to social sciences, questioning and redefining the most widely accepted notions in IR (such a realism's and liberalism's *anarchic nature of the international system*).⁵ In this work, poststructuralism is used due to its advantageous conceptual framework which enables a researcher to conduct discourse analysis tailored for the research aims specified in the previous chapter.

2.1. Theoretical framework

This subchapter describes and explains the theoretical foundations this work is based upon. In particular, it provides an account on the theory of poststructuralism and specifies the concepts which are utilized for analysis conducted in the next chapter.

One of the most distinctive feature of poststructuralism is its particular emphasis on the constructed nature of people's understanding of the world. This defines its basic difference from many other major theories in social sciences and especially International Relations, such as realism and liberalism, which operate within a positivist framework, arguing that the world and phenomena exist objectively and that it is possible to research them as positivists. Poststructuralism, on the other hand, argues that there is no given essence to any phenomenon – instead of this, it is always a matter of interpretation which define the nature of a phenomenon in our eyes.⁶ No things or phenomena can have an automatically defined meaning *per se* – moreover, this also means that those meanings ascribed to them can shift.

Within the context of this work, this implies that all references to what Russia means in the Ukrainian governmental discourse cannot be deemed automatically defined: both

⁴ CHILTON, P., and SCHÄFFNER, C. (2011): Discourse and Politics. In T. VAN DIJK (Ed.): *Discourse Studies. A Multidisciplinary Introduction*. 2nd ed. London: SAGE, pp. 3

⁵ HANSEN, L. (2014): Poststructuralism. In John Baylis, Steve Smith, Patricia Owens (Eds.): *The globalization of world politics. An introduction to international relations*. Sixth edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 170

⁶ Ibid, p. 172

messages “Russia as the eternal enemy” and “Russia is our closest ally” are constructed, and neither geographic location nor cultural proximity nor historical events by themselves can explain the stance of the Ukrainian government on Russia. Certainly, poststructuralism does not try to deny the influence of such factors on politics, but argues that it is not appropriate to take only them into account without looking at how the Ukrainian government conceptualizes and understands these factors – just like in the famous Wendt’s “anarchy is what states make of it.”⁷

A set of shared assumptions, and in particular the focus on the constructed nature of facts, things and phenomena, make some question in which ways poststructuralism is different from constructivism. The most prominent difference important in the context of this work consists in their respective epistemological assumptions. While constructivism embraces a positivist epistemological stance, arguing that it is possible to explore structures through the lenses of causal relationship, poststructuralists claim that researching causality is inappropriate. This is “not because there are no such things as structures, but because these structures are constituted through human action [and] [s]tructures cannot therefore be independent variables.”⁸ This means that poststructuralism is a constitutive theory. Consequently, as being based on poststructuralism, this work does not use a framework of research based on the research of causal relationship, and rather constitutes an interpretative research.

The focus of poststructuralism on discourse and language certainly places some significant limits on its explanatory capacity. In particular, Drulák points out that poststructuralism is inefficient in explaining phenomena beyond discourse.⁹ At the same time, this merely means that researchers using this theory should adapt research aims of their works accordingly. For this work, poststructuralism provides a conceptual framework sufficient for meeting the research aim pointed out in the previous chapter. Thus, this work

⁷ WENDT, A. (1992). Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics. *International Organization* 46 (2)

⁸ HANSEN, L. (2014): Poststructuralism. In J. BAYLIS, S. SMITH, P. OWENS (Eds.): *The globalization of world politics. An introduction to international relations*. Sixth edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 170-171

⁹ DRULÁK, P. (2003): *Teorie mezinárodních vztahů*. Vyd. 1. Prague: Portál, p.118

cannot be expected to explain strictly positivist aspects of the Ukrainian-Russian relations, as the focus is on discursive constructions.

Given the theory's emphasis on the role of discourses played in the social world, it is difficult to avoid the importance of language. As poststructuralism argues, language is ontologically significant for the mere reason that it serves as a medium through which meanings and identities are ascribed.¹⁰ In this way, supposing that the world cannot be comprehended and researched without meanings and identities ascribed to particular things or phenomena, it is not possible to avoid the overwhelming role of language. As Chilton and Schäffner argue, political processes are themselves constituted through text and political activity "does not exist without the use of language."¹¹

At the same time, language used by actors is not completely unstructured. Linguistic tools of identity ascription are called articulations. Laclau and Mouffe (2014) define an articulation as the "practice which establishes a relation between elements (for example, signs) in such a way that their identity is changed as a result."¹² In other words, articulations are used for those pieces of text and talk that characterize an actor in a particular way. It should be also noted that in this work the terms "articulation" and "utterance" are used interchangeably (this is due to a conceptual overlap in the concerned theoretical literature). In this way, we can talk of an articulation (or utterance) by actor A which characterizes actor (phenomenon, thing) B in a particular way and thus constitutes an identity of actor B in the eyes of actor A.

Articulations, in turn, form discourses, which are the key concept poststructuralism works with. The term "discourse", being central to this work, needs to be scrutinized in details. It is often used in academic and non-academic context, which generates certain

¹⁰ HANSEN, L. (2006): *Security as practice. Discourse analysis and the Bosnian war*. London: Routledge (The new international relations), p. 18

¹¹ CHILTON, P., and SCHÄFFNER, C. (2011): *Discourse and Politics*, p. 3

¹² LACLAU, E., and MOUFFE, C. (2014): *Hegemonie a socialistická strategie. Za radikálně demokratickou politiku*. 1. české vyd. Praha: Karolinum (Politeia)

ambiguity of meanings. In academia, as Chilton and Schäffner note, it is often referred to as a “stretch of real-time utterances “perceived as a single language event.”¹³

However, in this work discourse is broadly understood as a system of values and rules that define the ways in which words can be connected, given that these rules are “not grammatical or syntactical rules but rules for what gives meaning socially.”¹⁴ Discourses are considered to be constitutive forces in the construction of the social world and not merely reflections of the existing objective reality. Discourses are essentially “frameworks of meaning” which serve as sources to form world representations and attribute meanings to world aspects by marginalizing or excluding other representations of the world.¹⁵ For this reason, Discourse Analysis implies researching what exactly is included and excluded from a particular discourse.

Discourse is thus here understood in a Foucaultian manner, who referred to it as the “totality of utterances in a society viewed as an autonomous evolving entity in relation to which individuals only have partial self-determination, if any at all” – or, as Larsen formulates it, a “limited range of possible statements promoting a limited range of meanings.”¹⁶ This also implies that both discourses and texts are not products of individuals – they are instead social phenomena.¹⁷

In this way, discourses can be related to as sets of utterances that can be categorized according to spheres they take place in (as conventionally and commonly understood outside of Discourse Analysis) or according to meanings they feature. This is why, for instance, one can talk about a “Ukrainian governmental discourse” (thereby referring to a set of utterances

¹³ CHILTON, P., and SCHÄFFNER, C. (2011): *Discourse and Politics*, p. 18; WERTH, P. (1999). *Text Worlds: Representing Conceptual Space in Discourse*. London: Longman, p. 1

¹⁴ KRATOCHVÍL, P. (2008): The Discursive Resistance to EU-Enticement. The Russian Elite and (the Lack of) Europeanisation, *Europe-Asia Studies* 60 (3), p. 14; LARSEN, H. (1997). *Foreign policy and discourse analysis. France, Britain and Europe*. London: Routledge (Routledge advances in international relations and politics), p. 14

¹⁵ CARTA, C., and MORIN, J. (2014): *EU Foreign Policy through the Lens of Discourse Analysis*. Oxon: Routledge, p. 44; LARSEN, H. (2005): *Analysing the Foreign Policy of Small States in the EU: The Case of Denmark*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, p. 44-47

¹⁶ CHILTON, P., and SCHÄFFNER, C. (2011): *Discourse and Politics*, p. 18; LARSEN, H. (2005). *Analysing the Foreign Policy of Small States in the EU: The Case of Denmark*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, p. 47

¹⁷ LARSEN, H. (2005). *Analysing the Foreign Policy of Small States in the EU: The Case of Denmark*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, p. 48

of bodies and institutions of the executive branch of power in Ukraine) or a “Ukrainian anti-Russian militaristic discourse” (a set of utterances featuring anti-Russian sentiments with the emphasis on the need to counter Russia with military means).

Discourses as understood by poststructuralists have several features needed to be emphasized. An important point is that discourses are not considered to be stable – they change and evolve, and a change in discourse (conceptualized as a change in the set of meanings it promotes) does not necessarily imply a change of discourse. Discourses struggle for the promotion of particular meanings and therefore compete with each other, pursuing the aim of fixing the meanings in the own preferred way.¹⁸

Another important notion in Discourse Analysis is intertextuality. It stays for an idea that actors produce articulations as based on previous discourse(s). In this way, their articulations are not isolated from other articulations. Intertextuality thus can be understood as “interconnectivity of a discourse.”¹⁹ When looking at intertextuality, the key is to analyze which exactly discursive elements are chosen and what is the reasoning behind this choice.

2.2. Methodological considerations

There are many versions of Discourse Analysis as a method of research, which makes it necessary to specify how exactly it will proceed in this work. Which exactly method is chosen depends greatly on research aims of the particular research. Such versions of Discourse Analysis as Critical Discourse Analysis, as well as those types concerned with cognition, ideology or conversation analysis, are not included into this work. This research is most accurately described as Political Discourse Analysis, but it should be stressed that it does not cover topics such as power relations or securitization to such extent as some literature does (typically research goes into details into one particular topic among those aforementioned). Since this work deals with a topic which is relatively underresearched and consequently seeks

¹⁸ Ibid; HANSEN, L. (2006): *Security as practice. Discourse analysis and the Bosnian war*. London: Routledge (The new international relations), p. 21

¹⁹ HODGES, A. (2015): Intertextuality in Discourse. In D.TANNEN, H. HAMILTON, and D. SCHIFFRIN (Eds.) *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. Malden, Mass., Oxford: Blackwell Publishers (Blackwell handbooks in linguistics); HANSEN, L. (2006): *Security as practice. Discourse analysis and the Bosnian war*. London: Routledge (The new international relations). HANSEN, L. (2014): *Poststructuralism*

to address the research gap, it is considered to be appropriate to identify and describe general trends of representation of an actor in discourses.

Time scope of this work is restricted to a period of approximately one year. The covered period starts with president Yanukovych's escape from his residence in Mezhyhirya and his subsequent evasion to Russia, which brought to power Oleksander Turchynov on 22.02.2014 and basically marked the beginning of the post-Maidan period, which had immense implications for the composition of the Ukrainian government. This was the time when the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine started. The covered period ends with the Second Minsk Agreement which took place on 11-12.02.2015. In this way, the covered period includes the time of the most active period of the Russian aggression against Ukraine. The time scope of the work is confined to this period because it suggests well-defined boundaries which mark the first stage of the Russian aggression. The Euromaidan revolution as an essentially internal matter of Ukraine is left out of this research. In this way, the time scope chosen here allows focusing on an external actor in the governmental discourse with minimum possible distraction to internal matters. Although it is certainly acknowledged that both in terms of discourse and decision-making internal and external dimensions of politics are essentially intertwined, such conceptual delimitation is considered to be necessary in order for the research to be more focused and thus deeper.

As far as the Ukrainian government is concerned, the time scope covers strictly speaking the very end of the Azarov second government's functioning (from the beginning of the covered period on 22.02.2014 till 27.02.2014 – the government though was hardly functional at that time, and for this reason a minor number of representations of Russia are expected to appear in the governmental discourse), the full time of functioning of the Yatseniuk's first government (from 27.02.2014 till 01.12.2014) and partly also of the Yatseniuk's second government (from 02.12.2014. till Minsk II – 11.02.2015). The first government of Yatseniuk's was formed on the basis of the pre-Maidan elections to the Ukrainian Parliament, the second government was formed by the coalition of the parties that were elected in the November 2014 elections.

Since this research analyses a discourse of highest official elites, texts in Ukrainian and Russian are used – Ukrainian being the only state language in Ukraine, and Russian being

widely used on a daily basis (including in governmental settings alongside with the official Ukrainian). It is acknowledged that in Ukraine a plenty of other languages are used by Ukrainian as well as foreign citizens residing in the country, but it should be noted that almost all of them are confined to very specific and narrow audiences, such as ethnic minorities or expat communities, which could bear very significant consequences for the content of respective discourses. For example, discourse of the Kyiv Post newspaper, which is available only in English and only online, is expected to be different from a discourse of a popular newspaper in Ukrainian which is available in all Ukrainian towns for the mere reason they address different audiences and most likely cover different topics.

An important limitation of the work is that it works with written text available online. Online texts are considered to be sufficient for the representation of the Ukrainian governmental discourse since the major official sources are available online (in other words, there are no major official resources published exclusively offline which would be not accessible in the Internet, which would put a serious restriction on this work's value). The focus on written text primarily means that instances of talk (spoken utterances) are not included into this research. The main reason of this is that analysis of spoken interactions (such as, for example, audio- and/or videorecordings in the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine) would require a much more sophisticated research framework, including conversation analysis that would take into account not only pragmatics and syntax, but also gestures and intonations etc.

After the research aims and the theoretical framework is identified and described, one needs to specify and define the corpus of texts which are to be analyzed. Given the aforementioned research limitations, only texts that became published during the covered period are going to be used in this research (all texts are available in open access, for some governmental resources a free and non-restricted website registration is required). Since this work focuses on the Ukrainian governmental discourse, official sources were used in it. Official resources are deemed to be those which are used on official pages of the Ukrainian government and the official newspaper of the government. The corpus is thus confined to the web-site of the Ukrainian government *Uriadovyi portal* («Урядовий портал»), and the official newspaper of the government of Ukraine *Uriadovyi Kurier* («Урядовий кур'єр»).

The corpus drawn from *Uriadovyi kurier* and *Uriadovyi portal* include over 1600 articulations that represented Russia in a particular way.

As noted by many theorists who were concerned with Discourse Analysis, text genre always places restrictions on the text, on its content and the manner in which information is transmitted. As *Uriadovyi kurier* is a newspaper of an official state body, it predictably contains texts in the publicistic genre with some exceptions (for example, a number of texts are legal – through publishing them the newspaper informs the readership of official decisions of the Ukrainian government, which is one of its functions). The journalist genre allows a rather great degree of flexibility, but on the other hand, the official status of the newspaper restricts it. This means that messages transmitted in particular articles can be hidden by these restrictions, and exploring them implies looking at the context, euphemisms, synonyms and other figures of speech used.

Uriadovyi kurier (literally *Governmental Courier*) is a daily official newspaper of the Ukrainian government (the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine).²⁰ It exists in printed and online versions; as there is little difference between the two versions, the latter was used in this research due to good accessibility. The official status of the newspaper is underpinned by the fact that a part of decisions, directives and other legal acts produced by the Ukrainian executive state bodies come into effect as of being published in *Uriadovyi kurier*. The primary advantage of the use of *Uriadovyi kurier*'s content in this work consists in the possibility of researching the context within which the Ukrainian governmental discourse operated. As demonstrated in the research, there were no contradictions between messages presented by articulations in *Uriadovyi kurier* and the web-page of the Cabinet of Ministers in Ukraine.

The theory was applied to the case study in the following way. This work considered the possibility of categorizing discourses according to the meanings they would ascribe to Russia – meaning *Russia* in a broad sense (the Russian political or economic elites, the Russian people, the Russian Federation and so on). Indeed, what exactly would be meant by *Russia* in particular discourses would be considered to be an important feature of this

²⁰ Articles are published on a daily basis from Tuesday to Saturday (also during the covered period).

discourse. Some discourses were expected to generalize *Russia* and perceive it as a single conceptual unit covering both the people and elites, others are expected to decouple the concept and separate the government from the people. This could have very significant consequences for normative messages of respective discourses. For example, within the former discourse, it would be much easier to justify the introduction of the visa regime for Russian citizens, blaming all of them for the Russian aggression against Ukraine. The latter discourse would not provide such possibility, since punishing every single Russian citizen for the unfair actions of its government is not necessarily considered to be fair because the Russian government and the people are not deemed to be the same. Since discourses are non-individualistic, as already argued, actors were not considered to be the most important criterion of categorization. The only difference from this framework that was established during the research was the lack of competing subdiscourses in the Ukrainian governmental discourse. In this way, categorization was not possible, but the means designed for categorization were used for defining how the single Ukrainian governmental discourse represented the concept of Russia.

The analysis was conducted through open reading of texts from the corpus. This means that no discourses or ways of characterization were drawn before the very stage of analysis. This allowed capturing the available picture with minimum distortion and avoiding already existing categories drawn in different circumstances by other authors. Meanings (both descriptive and normative, explicit and implicit) featured by particular texts were briefly described on a working sheet. While the analysis of more and more texts was finished, it became possible to draw a preliminary patterns of characterization. In this context, there is an important presumption by poststructuralism which says that text can be read and comprehended by readers – in other words, there is no hidden meaning beyond the text which can be unreachable for a reader, including a researcher.²¹

Once the needed data were collected, it was possible to start their analysis. It was conducted through the review of the meanings promoted by particular texts and actors and

²¹ LARSEN, H. (2005). *Analysing the Foreign Policy of Small States in the EU: The Case of Denmark*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, p. 48

making broader generalizations about them. This will include both finalization of the process of defining characteristics ascribed to Russia and identification of means used by them.

3. Analysis

3.1. Historical dimension

The Ukrainian governmental discourse used the historical dimension in articulating the concept Russia in various ways. There were several key historical periods that were regularly mentioned, characterized and redefined. These periods pertained to several (semi)-state formations that are concerned with respectively Ukraine and Russia in modern Ukrainian historiography: Kyivan Rus, Cossack Hetmanate, Muscovy, the Russian Empire, Ukrainian People's Republic, Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), Carpathian Ukraine and Soviet Union. In general, the discourse produced a quite consistent vision of the past.

Official historiography of both Ukraine and Russia trace the roots of the both counties from the medieval state of Kyivan Rus. The Ukrainian governmental discourse did not refer to it often. However, from time to time it explicitly mentioned Ukraine's absolute right to claim original heredity for it: "Ukraine is the Rus that stayed home" – *unlike Russia that absorbed foreign non-Slavic elements that later on formed its base*; "[Putin] keeps 'forgetting' that Rus from the very beginning was Kyivan" – *thus not Muscovian, as falsely claimed by the Russian authorities*.²²

The explanation for this consists the following. For the Ukrainian governmental discourse, the logical problem consisted in an uneasy choice: either to distance itself from Russia and subsequently from the heredity of Kyivan Rus or to accept that Ukraine had common historical roots with Russia. Giving up the heritage of Kyivan Rus was challenging because there is no major alternative to it, and Ukraine would be thus presented as a state without long history.

²² URIADOVYI KURIER, *Kolys i Rosiia usvidomyt vtratu...*, July 15, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/kolis-i-rosiya-usvidomit-vtratu/>; URIADOVYI KURIER, *Pobachyty Kyivsku Rus*, August 8, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/pobachiti-kiyivsku-rus/>; URIADOVYI KURIER, *Rosiiski materi, zaberit svoikh syniv*, August 29, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/rosiiski-materi-zaberit-svoyih-syniv/>; URIADOVYI PORTAL, *U MON obhovoryly novu redaktsiiu prohram z istorii Ukrainy ta vsesvitnoi istorii dlia zahalnoosvitnikh navchalnykh zakladiv*, October 7, 2014, http://old.kmu.gov.ua/kmu/control/uk/publish/article?art_id=247658963

For the Ukrainian governmental discourse, this would not be a valid option – the discourse repeatedly emphasized the legitimacy of Ukrainians residing on the territory through the tradition of local historical settlement and governance. Accepting common historical roots with Russia would mean duplicating the official Russian discourse as it presented Ukraine and Russia as *brotherly nations*, subsequently questioning the existence of the separate Ukrainian nation. The discourse never demonstrated willingness to make either choice, and the solution was found in claiming Russia was not the inheritor of Kyivan Rus or even arguing that Russia was the successor of Kyivan Rus' foe, the *Mongol Tatar Golden Horde*: “Previously the Mongol-Tatar [occupants] attacked Kyivan Rus on horses. Nowadays, Russians come here by [trucks] and tanks.”²³

The struggle with the official Russian discourse was the main topic in which Kyivan Rus was mentioned, and this was tightly concerned with the understanding of the relationship between Russians and Ukrainians: “And, finally, [the Russian claim] “Ukrainians, Russians and Belarusians are one nation.” This is nonsense [...]. *Rus, Rossiia* are the historical names of Ukraine [, not of Russia].”²⁴ The discourse unequivocally challenged the concept of (Eastern) Slavic brotherhood as stemming from the common medieval heritage. The very name, however, was mentioned much more often in the context of the same-name Ukrainian military battalion than of the medieval state. The discourse even interpreted the victory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which occupied the biggest part of the modern Ukrainian territory, as a common victory of Ukrainians, Poles and Lithuanians over Russians. The victory was deemed as symbolic in relation to the current war: “both at that time and today, Ukrainians together with the civilized world were resisting Moscow’s aggression.”²⁵

In the middle of the 17th century, the so-called Cossack Hetmanate (considered to have been the predecessor of Ukraine in the Ukrainian official historical discourse) asked for

²³ URIADOVYI PORTAL, *Arsenii Yatseniuk pro rosiiskyi "humanitarnyi vantazh": Teper vsia vidpovidalnist lezhyt na RF i vykliuchno na rosiiskomu prezidentovi*, August 22, 2014, http://old.kmu.gov.ua/kmu/control/uk/publish/article?art_id=247545772

²⁴ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Oleksandr PONOMARIV: «Naspravdi my rizni narody...»*, December 16, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/oleksandr-ponomariv-naspravdi-mi-rizni-narodi/>

²⁵ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Pravda cherez piat stolit*, August 19, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/pravda-cherez-pyat-stolit/>; URIADOVYI PORTAL, *Ponad 7000 biitsiv iz zony ATO bezkoshtovno vidvidaly kulturno-mystetski zakhody po vsii Ukraini*, January 14, 2015, http://old.kmu.gov.ua/kmu/control/uk/publish/article?art_id=247870548

the protectorate of Muscovy in the face of the Polish threat. In this way, approximately half and subsequently most of the modern Ukrainian territory came to be under the Russian rule. Centuries after that, debates on rightfulness of this choice have not faded out. The uneasy relations with Russia became another trigger to redefine the Pereyaslav Council, which orchestrated this historical passage.

The Ukrainian governmental discourse was not an exception to this. Prominent Ukrainian historians which could be hardly blamed as Russophiles, Yaroslav Hrytsak and Serhii Plokhyy, point out that it was largely Kyivans (not Muscovites/Russians) who constructed the myth of the two brotherly nations, slowly drifting into the myth of the single nation of Russians and Ukrainians.²⁶ This academic liberal Ukrainian discourse was hardly echoed in the official governmental discourse. Muscovy, as the latter argued, committed de-facto occupation of Ukraine, while propagating hypocritical messages about the “reunification of two nations”; the agreement itself lacked legitimacy because of no approval by the Cossack General Council.²⁷

The discourse also struggled with Soviet and Russian historiography that claimed Pereyaslav Council was an undeniable blessing, while in the discursive reality it was the beginning of the Russian occupation of Ukraine.²⁸ In some cases, this occupation was interpreted through personal feelings with explicitly negative connotation: “No one talks about the fact that the *Russian brothers* started their presence on the lands of *my Volyn*’ [part of Ukraine] by forming lists of [deportations to Siberia].”²⁹

Whether with the use of emotional means or not, the discourse used extensively the metropole-colony model for highlighting the essentially unequal relationship between Ukraine and Russia. This inequality was by no means considered legitimate or fair, since Russia, as argued, constantly violated the right of Ukrainians to govern themselves

²⁶ HRYTSAK, Y. (1996): *Narysy z istorii Ukraïny: formuvannia Ukraïnskoïi modernoi natsii*. Kyiv: Geneza; PLOKHYY, S. (2018): *Vrata Yevropy: istoriia Ukrainy*. Moscow: Izdatelstvo AST.

²⁷ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Pereiaslavska rada: vid bratannia — do okupatsii*, March 22, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/pereiaslavskoyi-rada-vid-bratannya-do-okupatsii/>

²⁸ URIADOVYI KURIER, *75-richchia pochatku Druhoi svitovoi viiny: todi pereimalysia «nimetskomovnymy hromadianamy Polshchi»*, August 30, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/75-richchya-pochatku-drugoyi-svitovoyi-vijni-todi-/>

²⁹ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Do brata zi zbroieiu ne khodiat*”, March 19, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/do-brata-zi-zbroieiu-ne-hodyat/>, emphasis added

independently, while this right was implicitly considered natural and inalienable. The discourse never referred to those Ukrainians who did not wish independence for Ukraine. In the discursive reality, more or less all ethnic Ukrainian citizens of the Russian Empire stove for independence, even if not much evidence of this was available today. Russia was thus considered an uninvited and unwelcome actor. This disrupted legitimacy of its historical presence on the Ukrainian territories.

For this reason, the word *occupation* [of Ukrainian territories into Russia] was preferred to the word *incorporation*. In the context of the Ukrainian governmental discourse, consequence of the semantic difference consisted in respective legitimization and delegitimization of the Russian rule over Ukraine. Additionally, this past *occupation* reflected the reality of 2014, in which the official Russian discourse called Russians and Ukrainians one nation (for example, Putin personally mentioned this)³⁰ and emphasized the artificial nature of the Ukrainian state.

In articulations about glorious victories of the Russian empire over third parties (e.g. not Ukrainians), the discourse emphasized that Ukrainians were the nation that contributed a lot, whether by human or material resources: “Traditionally, not a single “Russian” war was fought without Ukrainians, whose courage, firmness, military skills strengthened both the Tsarist and Soviet empires,” “It is worth mentioning that the most powerful in the Russian Empire gunpowder factory was located in Shostka [town in Northern Ukraine], that provided over 40% of the ‘all-Russian’ production.”^{31 32} Ukraine, in line with this discourse was also a victim of the Russian greatness, and without Ukrainians this mightiness could never had been achieved, even in the context of the imperial aesthetics: “The dignified [Saint-Petersburg rests on bones of Ukrainian Cossacks, tormented on its construction, [and on goods] taken out from Ukraine for a trifling sum [...].”³³ In some instances, the discourse

³⁰ SIOHODNI, “Ukraina i Rosiia – odyń narod”: Putin zghadav istoriiu, December 14, 2017, <https://ukr.segodnya.ua/world/russia/ukraina-i-rossiya-odin-narod-putin-vspomnil-istoriyu-1098647.html>

³¹ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Tiazhke pokhmilia «peremozhnoi» viiny*, August 27, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/tyazhke-pokhmillya-peremozhnoyi-vijni/>

³² URIADOVYI KURIER, *Chervonozoriani «fashysty» pid mistom Leva*, September 20, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/chervonozoryani-fashisti-pid-mistom-leva/>

³³ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Salom — proty Ukrainy*, July 5, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/salom-proti-ukrayini/>

directly and unequivocally counterpointed Ukraine and Russia: “the [Russian] emperor strove to conquer the whole world, and the [leader of the Ukrainian Cossacks] wished the best to the Ukrainian nation on its eternal land given by God.”³⁴

An interesting element of the Ukrainian governmental discourse on Russia is evaluation of the Soviet past. It was especially appealing in the context of the so-called decommunization process. It was the process of dismantlement of symbolic Communist heritage that was overwhelmingly present in the Ukrainian reality. It commenced somewhat later, in 2015, and was based on the package of laws that among other things banned the use of Communist and Nazi symbols. Prospects of the decommunization process were widely debated in various Ukrainian discourses, and these debates came out from narratives on the Soviet Union as such. One of these narratives was more than well represented in the Ukrainian governmental discourse in 2014 and early 2015.

There were two important points regarding the Soviet Union in the discourse. Firstly, it is not possible to categorize the discursive stance on the USSR if one takes just two categories – “absolutely negative” and “absolutely positive”. In other words, there was a significant degree of ambiguity in evaluations of the Soviet past. This was not the case of the Russian Empire that was characterized just negatively.

On the one hand, the Soviet Union was negatively characterized as an empire with ambitions and means typical for empires. The word *empire* was repeated frequently and bore an explicitly negative meaning. Very often, for the Soviet Union Ukrainians were nothing more than bargaining chip – for instance, in negotiations with Nazi Germany over the division of Poland and Ukraine.³⁵ In general, comparison of the Soviets and Nazis was not unusual for the discourse. This put the blame for crimes on the evil Soviet and Nazi states, while Ukrainians had “no other sin than loving own land.”³⁶ The struggle with the Russian

³⁴ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Hetman odyn, a istoriia — rizna*, March 15, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/getman-odin-istoriya-rizna/>

³⁵ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Tiazhke pokhmillya «peremozhnoi» viiny*, August 27, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/tyazhke-pokhmillya-peremozhnoyi-vijni/>; URIADOVYI KURIER, “Bez patriotiv u derzhavy nemaie maibutnoho”, September 19, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/news/bez-patriotiv-u-derzhavi-nemaye-majbutnogo/>; URIADOVYI KURIER, “«Bratnia dopomoha» po-rosiyski”, September 13, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/bratnya-dopomoga-po-rosiyski/>

³⁶ URIADOVYI KURIER, “Do brata zi zbroieiu ne khodiat!”, March 19, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/do-brata-zi-zbroieiu-ne-hodyat/>, emphasis added

discourse over the concept of *Slavic brotherhood* continued in articulations on the Soviet period as well. The discourse considered this concept as cover for real malicious intentions of Russia – whether in the imperial, Soviet or modern Russian. In the context of the Soviet rule, the discourse mentioned *horrors of Holodomor* and *the Great Terror of 1937* in explicitly negative terms.³⁷ The discourse also drew a parallel between 1937 and 2014 comparing Russian (FSB) and Soviet (NKVD) security services – not praising the both, but condemning their wrong aims and criminal means (like tortures against Soviet and Ukrainian citizens).³⁸

On the other hand, many particular elements of the Soviet past were praised or at least debated. In particular, discourse did not meet consensus on the personality of the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev (referred to as *Mykyta Khrushchov* – the discourse used the Ukrainian version of his name), who was an ethnic Russian with Ukrainian roots and political connections to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. He was called *liberal* both seriously and ironically. Despite his anecdotal image stemming from the Soviet times (and partly reflected in the discourse), it was contested by a number of articulations arguing Khrushchev was a great Soviet reformer. At the same time, the oppressive actions of the Soviet authorities under the rule of Khrushchev (such as “drowning Hungary in blood” in 1956 or shooting at a peaceful workers’ demonstration in 1961 in Novocherkassk) were directly linked to his personality.³⁹

Quite often, the discourse tried to legitimize the transfer of Crimea under the rule of the Ukrainian SSR through cleaning up the image of Khrushchev. It is important to highlight here that no Soviet leaders residing in Moscow were ever considered as Ukrainians – they

³⁷ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Heroizm i trahediia Karpatskoi Ukrainy*, March 13, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/geroyizm-i-tragediya-karpatskoyi-ukrayini/>

³⁸ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Doroslishannia «Hamera» i yoho tvortsia*, August 2, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/doroslishannya-gamera-i-jogo-tvorcya/>

³⁹ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Shchyryi komunist z voliuntarystskymy «zamashkami»*, April 12, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/shirij-komunist-z-volyuntaristskimi-zamashkami/>; URIADOVYI KURIER, *Vyzvolennia po-rosiisky*, October 11, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/vizvolennya-po-rosiyski/>; URIADOVYI KURIER, *Vid starodubskoi rizni do putinskykh «narodnykh respublik»*, July 26, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/vid-starodubskoyi-rizni-do-putinskih-narodnih-resp/>; URIADOVYI KURIER, *U Baryshivtsi na Kyivshchyni vin stvoriv muzei Tarasa Shevchenka*, December 20, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/u-barishivci-na-kiyivshini-vin-stvoriv-muzej-taras/>; URIADOVYI KURIER, *Vchenyi, yakij mriiav pro sylnu Ukrainu*, January 17, 2015, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/vchenij-yakij-mriyav-pro-silnu-ukrayinu/>

were essentially Soviet and Russian. When it came to political matters, legitimacy of Soviet inheritance to Russia did not come into question. This allows to speak about certain elements as contributing to the overall positive image of Russia in the Ukrainian governmental discourse. However, particularly in the historical part of the discourse, this constituted an exception rather than a rule.⁴⁰

Concerning others Soviet leaders, such as Lenin, Stalin, Malenkov, Brezhnev, Andropov, Gorbachev and others, the discourse exploited the same *metropole-colony* model when it came to discussing their role for Ukraine. In the discourse, all of them in spite of their background (including ethnicity) were first and foremost representatives of Russia, not only the Soviet Union. The discourse restrained from romantic and nostalgic characterization of the Soviet period in general, but praised very particular elements.

Another example of praising the Soviet past was the *Victory over fascism* (the victory of the Allies in the Second World War). The discourse referred to it in a manner that resembled many elements of Russian and Soviet discourses: for example, it was particularly called a *victory over fascism*, not *Nazism*, the war was called the *Great Patriotic War*, and the period of war implied was 1941-1945, when the Soviet Union fought the Nazi Germany, not 1939-1945 (the dating, however, was changed a year later). The victory was called in the discourse *ours* (e.g. including *our Ukrainian*), but there were no references to *the common Soviet victory* (not to mention *our and Russian victory*).

The principle of defining what was *good Soviet* was based on picking up those achievements of Soviet Ukraine and Soviet Ukrainians that contributed to the image of post-1991 Ukraine. The most prominent element was Ukrainian industries (or at least contribution of Soviet Ukraine to common Soviet successes concerned with industry): past space programs, the Antonov aircraft manufacturing company, various factories producing components for space rockets, hydroelectric power stations etc. In the discourse, (the Soviet) Russia was almost absent when it came to recitation of real achievements of the USSR. To generalize, Russia was differentiated from *good Soviet*, but was not differentiated from *bad*

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Soviet. While the Soviet airplane manufactured in Ukraine was called Ukrainian, the ideology of Bolshevism practiced by local Ukrainians was nonetheless called Russian.

Secondly, there discourse was concerned with the issue of historical legacy, which connected the Soviet Union to its present forms (in other words, which actor could claim to be the inheritor of the Soviet Union). While the Ukrainian governmental discourse struggled with Russian discourses on the inheritance link *Kyivan Rus-Muscovy-Russian Empire*, it had little doubts on the link *Russian Empire-Soviet Union*. It did not matter that Bolsheviks were ideologically opposed to the very idea of the Russia Empire, the discourse argued. For Ukrainians, both the Empire and USSR meant all the same: oppression, the lack of freedoms (including those concerned with the expression of national identity, but not restricted only to them), dominance of the Russian language and culture. The *metropole-colony* relationship between Russia and Ukraine remained.

One of the most long-standing problems concerned with both the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union was the status of the Ukrainian language. The discourse systematically mentioned the piece of law from 1863, called *Valuev Circular*, that severely restricted the use of Ukrainian in public life. In the context of the Soviet Union, it referred to the increasing disrespect of Moscow towards the language of locals: “The stronger the Soviet authorities were becoming, the less Ukrainian there were, and the concentrated manifestation of chauvinism towards the “natives” soon became the famous phrase that [said it was] “[it’s] *better to be abused than to be Ukrainized*.”⁴¹

The word *Ukraine* was frequently used in the historical part of the discourse without any sign of embarrassment. This is especially relevant in the context of military conflict between two entities. The discourse referred to the *war between Ukraine and Russia* in 2014, under Putin and Turchynov, and in 1709, under Peter the Great and the Cossack leader Ivan Mazepa.

It is thus possible to draw two conclusions about the historical aspect of the Ukrainian governmental discourse on Russia. Firstly, this aspect was deployed on a great scale.

⁴¹ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Salom — proty Ukrainy*, July 5, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/salom-proti-ukrayini/>, emphasis added on the words written in the Russian language in Ukrainian alphabet in order to highlight extraneousness of those who used it

References to the past Ukrainian-Russian relations and various definitions of what Ukraine and Russia used to be were not isolated articulations on history. They were tightly intertwined with the current understanding of Russia and the Ukrainian-Russian relations. The discourse generally drew a picture of a typical colonial relationship. *Ukraine was occupied by Russia* (precisely these definitions were used, although technically the appropriateness of their use is disputed), *Russia exploited Ukraine's human and material resources*, *Russia never treated Ukraine as equal*.

The second conclusion on the historical aspect of the Ukrainian governmental discourse was about *continuity* of events. Some articles pointed directly at this continuity, for example: “[...] no one could ever ignore demands of time – whether it be aspirations of enslaved nations of the Russian Empire or peaceful protesters of Maidan,” but most referred to it implicitly.⁴² This historical continuity from the Soviet Union to modern Russia was highlighted systematically and in various contexts: neither the Soviet Union respected other states’ boundaries, nor does the Russian Federation; just like the USSR waited for the Western world to collapse till own collapse, Russia will experience the same. Peter the Great, Lenin, Stalin and Putin in principle constituted the same when it came to the Ukrainian question.⁴³

3.2. Russia after 1991

Another question concerned with the historical dimension was whether the discourse created a post-Soviet periodization of the Russian rule. The Russian opposition discourse, for instance, projected nostalgia for the “liberal times of the Yeltsin rule” and even characterized the first two presidential terms of Putin in positive terms.⁴⁴ Yeltsin and Putin, in spite of their

⁴² URIADOVYI KURIER, *Hetman odyn, a istoriia — rizna*, March 15, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/getman-odin-istoriya-rizna/>

⁴³ URIADOVYI KURIER, *U Konhresi mistsevykh vlad Rady Yevropy zasudyly dii Rosii*, March 27, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/u-kongresi-miscevih-vlad-radi-yevropi-zasudili-diy/>; URIADOVYI KURIER, *Adam Rotfeld: «Dosi vsi ukrainski lidery dbaly pro sebe bilshe, nizh pro vlasnyi narod»*, May 24, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/adam-rotfeld-dosi-vsi-ukrayynski-lideri-dbali-pro-/>; URIADOVYI KURIER, *Salom — proty Ukrainy*, July 5, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/salom-proti-ukrayini/>

⁴⁴ MEDUZA, *Horoshie devyanostye: otkrytie «Eltsin-tsentra» V Ekaterinburge poyavilsya muzey pervogo prezidenta Rossii*, November 25, 2015, <https://meduza.io/feature/2015/11/25/horoshie-devyanostye-otkrytie-eltsin-tsentra>

successorship relations, were considered antagonists – if not personally, at least historically, according to their role for Russia. Periods before 2008 (when the aggression against Georgia took place), 2011 (massive protests in Russia, today known as *Bolotnaya* – after the name of the square where the protests took place) or 2014 (the aggression against Ukraine) in various cases could be thus characterized in good terms, as opposed to the illiberal, authoritarian, militarized times after these respective tipping points.

Both were concerned with two key personalities: Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin. Unlike the latter, Yeltsin was rarely mentioned in the Ukrainian discourse even before 2014 (with the exception of documents, which involved the Russian President, that however did not characterize Russia in any way). With the exception of the Chechen wars, the same concerned the *turbulent 90s*, which mostly underwent under Yeltsin's rule. And despite the Chechen wars were a powerful reference for depicting Russia in negative terms (see the next subchapter for more details), other aspects of the Russian 1990s were largely ignored. The fact of presidency of Dmitry Medvedev was also mostly ignored in the discourse – the period was treated as had lasted under the rule of Putin.

The first two terms of Putin (2000-2004 and 2004-2008 respectively) did not deserve much criticism. It was the third term (2012-2018) that gained the most negative attention. At the same time, the discourse did not construct a strict periodization of *good periods* and *bad periods* of Russian-Ukrainian relations before 2014. Speaking of the Putin-time periodization, the most traumatic year was certainly 2014, as Ukraine was directly concerned with it: the reasons named in the discourse were the annexation of Crimea and the aggression against Ukraine in Donbas. Although it is logical this particular year was understood as the culmination of bad relations between the states, it is far from self-evident whether the discourse would consider the Russian aggression as completely unexpected dictator's whim or a result of the persistent wish of the Russian nation to destroy Ukraine.⁴⁵

Yet in February 2014, most articulations on Russia were of neutral character. The discourse used a low number of synonyms to designate Russia and even in *Uriadovyi kurier*

⁴⁵ See subchapter 3.5 Who was implied meant by the concept *Russia* for more details on how the discourse interpreted actorness (who exactly started the aggression against Ukraine).

resembled more official records of facts than emotional articles, rich for metaphors and other figures of speech, which would be frequently used in articulations produced just a couple of weeks later (after first Russian forces appeared on the Ukrainian soil). Even in those articles which described problematic aspects of the Ukrainian-Russian relations (such as on the Russia's refusal to buy Ukraine's Eurobonds till the "stabilization of the political situation in Ukraine"), the discourse refrained from characterizing Russia in negative terms and even implicitly compared internal situations in the both countries in favor of Russia.⁴⁶

When it came to assessment the Ukrainian-Russian relations in February 2014, Russia was mostly characterized in the Ukrainian governmental discourse as a partner. While Ukraine's difficult economic and political situation was recognized, Russia was considered to be one of the parties, along the EU, interested in strong and rich Ukraine and able to facilitate many processes which would help Ukraine.⁴⁷ However, the discourse did not refer to Russia seeing its own national interest of Russia in supporting Ukraine. The discourse claimed this pro-Ukrainian Russian interest was a matter of fact, but never referred to Russia accepting this reality. Consequently, the Russian plans of invasion into Ukraine were not the result of its natural national interest, as the discourse argued. The attack had much more to do with the Russian leadership's meanness and villainy – in other words, purely irrational factors in the construction of foreign policy.

At the same time, some modest attempts of securitization took place in late February 2014. In particular, the discourse cited with no notes of criticism those US officials who admitted the possibility of Russia's military intervention into Ukraine.⁴⁸ As a matter of principle, the discourse did not exclude this possibility, although mostly characterized it as very unlikely. Ideological tensions between the Maidan protesters (whose language was to a great extent duplicated by the provisional government) and the Kremlin took place already during the revolution, in particular through the negative depiction of the protests in Russian state-owned and state-funded news agencies. Even despite this, the discourse constructed the

⁴⁶ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Rosiia vidmovylasia kupyty yevrooblihotsii Ukrainy*, February 25, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/rosiya-vidmovilasya-kupiti-yevroobligacyi-ukrayin/>

⁴⁷ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Bidna Ukraina ne vyhidna Yevropi*, February 25, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/bidna-ukrayina-ne-vigidna-yevropi/>

⁴⁸ URIADOVYI KURIER, *MVF chekaie na novyi uriad*, February 26, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/mvf-chekaye-na-novij-uryad/>

image of Russia as the crucial strategic partner of Ukraine – regardless of the foreign policy direction Ukraine would choose in the near future. Importance of Russia to Ukraine was unavoidable, and it did not matter whether Ukraine would aspire to join the EU and NATO or the Russia-led Eurasian Union etc.

However, soon after that the discourse changed its position on Russia radically. As the number of articles associating Russia with military threat increased, the view of Ukrainian-Russian relations became much colder. The discourse responded to the appearance of Russian forces in Crimea with a mix of hostility towards Moscow and desperate appeal to the *good relations between Ukraine and Russia*. The message of the appeal consistent in the following: *Ukraine and Russia used to coexist peacefully, and Russia ruined this peaceful relationship by violating Ukraine's sovereignty*. This brought up a question of responsibility for the conflict between the two countries and put blame on Moscow. The Ukrainian governmental discourse did not characterize any actions by the Ukrainian side as a legitimate reason for violating Ukraine's sovereignty – the Russia's actions were considered an unconditional crime. Moscow was then represented as a bad partner not only for Ukraine, but for many other actors. For instance, it was considered as behaving unfairly even towards its allies, such as Belarus.⁴⁹

Representations of Russia in the context of both Minsk I and Minsk II agreements were in no way different from this pattern: Russia was characterized as a bad partner for Ukraine. In general, as presented in the Ukrainian governmental discourse, Russia was cynical and with extremely low coherence between words and deeds: it never had respect for own promise. The inability to deliver promises was not only a matter of Russia's bad organization, low institutional capacity, poorness etc. To a large extent, it was the fault of the Russian leadership that consisted in intentional misuse of other actors' weak sides.

Nevertheless, the idea importance of Russia to Ukraine remained live in the discourse. There were moderate attempts to promote an idea of Ukrainian isolation from Russia, according to which Ukraine would be better off in politics, economics, and culture if

⁴⁹ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Yak Lukashenko Moskvi vkazav*, December 5, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/news/yak-lukashenko-moskvi-vkazav/>

disconnected as much as possible from Russia. At the same time, on a wider scale this mostly concerned economic protectionism: the discourse argued Ukrainians should avoid buying products produced in the Russian Federation in order not to support financially the aggressor state.

Already in the beginning of March 2014, the Ukrainian government defined the “development of comprehensive good-neighborly relations with the Russian Federation in all areas on a new, genuinely equal basis” as the second foreign policy priority (after signing the Association Agreement with the European Union and its implementation).⁵⁰ The importance of Russia to Ukraine as a partner and neighbor was not questioned. The relationship between the two states, however, was based on unacceptable terms. This trend to argue that the Ukrainian-Russian relations should be reviewed and changed, but not cut, remained until the end of the covered period.

Intertextuality with the Russian governmental discourse was manifested in reflections on concepts of *brotherhood* and *unity [between/of Ukraine and Russia]*. On the one hand, the Ukrainian governmental discourse used these concepts shared with the Russian discourse (mainly *brotherhood*, expressed through a number of related words: *brother [state]*, *brotherly [relations]*, *fraternally*) in order to characterize the Ukrainian-Russian relations before 2014 in a positive way. In such discursive instances, from the point of view of 2014, many problems in the relations between Kyiv and Moscow either were ignored or were considered insufficiently strong in order to disrupt the two states’ *fraternal relations*. On the other hand, the Ukrainian governmental discourse used the same concepts for exhibiting Moscow in a negative light with strongly condemning mood. Not only the aggression against Ukraine was considered a crime – it was presented to had been a crime against a *brotherly nation*.

On the one hand, Moscow propagated the narrative of *brotherhood* between Ukraine and Russia. On the other hand, it violated the commitments given by this brotherly relationship: “At some point communist, and now Russian imperial propaganda loves to

⁵⁰ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Oriientyry ye. Do roboty!*, March 1, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/oriyentiri-ye-do-roboti/>

exploit words about the single Slavic family of the three brotherly nations – Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian. Will those, who send hundreds of thousands of soldiers for “training” to our Eastern borders, remember that no one comes to the brother with an aimed gun? And that one of the most dreadful sins [...] is the sin of fratricide?”; “[Russia is an] enemy that hid under the mask of a brother.”⁵¹

From this point on, the Ukrainian governmental discourse started refuting the concepts of *brotherhood* and *unity*. Nevertheless, as demonstrated, it did not reject the concepts with no reason whatsoever. This rejection was based on the understanding of the Russian behavior as *betrayal*. Precisely the word *zrada* (Ukrainian for *betrayal*) was used in various forms when characterizing Russia’s aggression against Ukraine: “The latest events in Crimea, which was impudently, cynically and traitorously occupied by the “elder brother” [Russia] will be probably [discussed] [...] for many years.”⁵² In general, the discourse produced connected the concepts of *brotherhood* and *betrayal* in such a way that undermined the Russian moral position. With regard to this aspect, the discourse used emotional means in fixing meanings extensively.

The Ukrainian governmental discourse was also different from many more nationalistic Ukrainian discourses in wording used.⁵³ Many names have slightly different forms in Ukrainian and Russian, dictated by differences in phonetics and tradition – for example, Ukrainian *Oleksander* and Russian *Aleksandr*, Ukrainian *Hanna* and Russian *Anna*. Many non-governmental Ukrainian discourses used these differences for alienating Russian actors from Ukraine. This was especially visible on the example of how the word *Soviet* was used in liberal and nationalist Ukrainian discourses. While the former used the official

⁵¹ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Do brata zi zbroieiu ne khodiat!*, March 19, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/do-brata-zi-zbroieiu-ne-khodiat/>, emphasis added; URIADOVYI KURIER, *Aty-baty, dyversanty...*, August 27, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/ati-bati-diversanti/>

⁵² URIADOVYI KURIER, *Utratu informatsiinoho suverenitetu bulo splanovano*, April 17, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/utratu-informacijnogo-suverenitetu-bulo-splanovano/>; URIADOVYI KURIER, *«Bratnia dopomoha» po-rosiysky*, September 13, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/bratnya-dopomoga-po-rosiysky/>

⁵³ For example, VO SVOBODA, *Ruslan Koshulynskyi: Pidporiadkuvannia raionnykh viddiliv osvity raionnym administratsiiam – sovietskyi rudymet*, September 29, 2011, <http://svoboda.org.ua/news/events/00089827/>

translation into Ukrainian (*radians'kyi*)⁵⁴, the latter repeatedly used the word *soviets'kyi*, untypical and alien to the Ukrainian language. The same stood for *Vladimir Putin*: the Ukrainian form is *Volodymyr Putin*, and *Vladimir Putin* was used for demonstrating the alien nature of the politician in relation to Ukraine.

At the same time, the appeal to the good Russian-Ukrainian relations buried by Moscow's actions came into conflict with another vision systematically promoted in the discourse. That view argued that Russia's military aggression against Ukraine was nothing more than a logical continuation of its persistent wish to destroy Ukraine as a state. According to this, it did not matter that Ukraine chose the pro-European direction through the Euromaidan revolution in 2013-2014: Russia simply used the moment when the country was in stress, weak and vulnerable. Already in the middle of March 2014, the discourse stated: "The world has seen the aggressive policies of our neighbor [Russia] that has been convincing us about its good intentions, and moreover, was a guarantor of our security and a strategic partner. [...] The masks are unveiled."⁵⁵

In some instances, Russia was sometimes called *enemy* (although the use of this word was relatively rare): "Concerning the Russian-Ukrainian border, the enemy keeps accumulating heavy weapons here [...]"; "Your heroism, courage and persistence have allowed us to stop the enemy on the frontline [...]", – the Minister of Defense of Ukraine emphasized and congratulated intelligence officers and tankmen."⁵⁶ Importantly, this concerned not only the military dimension – this word was used also in political and economic matters.⁵⁷ In general, however, the use of the word *enemy* was severely limited; the discourse mostly avoided it.

⁵⁴ As *soviet* means *council* in Russia, it is translated as *rada* (also *council*) into Ukrainian.

⁵⁵ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Pid dulom avtomativ lehitymni rishennia ne pryimaiutsia*, March 13, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/pid-dulom-avtomativ-legitimni-rishennya-ne-prijmay/>

⁵⁶ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Prykordonnyky proty bandytiv: plan diie*, July 9, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/prikordonniki-proti-banditiv-plan-diye/>; URIADOVYI PORTAL, *Ministr oborony Ukrainy nahorodyv vidomchymy vidznakamy viiskovosluzhbovtiv v raioni provedennia ATO*, September 9, http://old.kmu.gov.ua/kmu/control/uk/publish/article?art_id=250255616

⁵⁷ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Vid tolerantnosti do zrazy – yak vid liubovi do nenavysti*, April 1, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/vid-tolerantnosti-do-zradi-yak-vid-lyubovi-do-nena/>

The Ukrainian governmental discourse had a great potential for claiming Russia was a dictatorial, authoritarian, fascist or fascistoid regime, as putting labels on Russia was widely accepted in various Ukrainian discourses. However, this chance was hardly utilized in the governmental discourse. Such kind of terminology was rarely used regarding Russia, and the discourse mostly struggled with the major Russian media discourse by ridiculing Russia's attempts to depict Ukraine as a fascist regime or junta without making similar ripostes. In general, the discourse used weakly negative or neutral terminology when it came to characterizing the Russian regime on the domestic Russian arena.

Another question about the Ukrainian governmental discourse is whether it claimed that Russia deliberately planned the attack on Ukraine, especially before 2014. In this context, the answer is unambiguously positive. The discourse contained numerous articulations on Russia's cruel plans regarding Ukraine, for instance: "We perfectly realize that Russia had a plan to create a new [South] Ossetia on the Ukraine's territory – with casualties, bloodshed, military and civil conflict."⁵⁸ This in some instances led to more sophisticated conspiracy hypotheses that speculated why exactly Russia conducted the attack: "We realize that after the winter Olympics [...] hotels and resorts of Sochi will empty... [The attack on Ukraine is] an attempt to undermine economic base of Crimea's development and in this way to transfer all tourist streams in Sochi."⁵⁹ The force driving Russia was thus nothing else than greed, the wish to get better off at Ukraine's expense.

At the same time, these characterizations of Russia remained at a more or less abstract level. When the discourse referred to Russia's malign plans to destroy Ukraine, it never specified when and how these plans had been drafted. There exists a rich factual account that can easily enable politicians to speak of the systematic wish of Russia for the Ukrainian state to collapse or at least be dependent on Russia: numerous gas and trade wars lead since the early 1990s, financing pro-Russian Ukrainian politicians and organizations, support of the Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine, conflicts over border demarcation, propaganda against particular Ukrainian politicians, movements and parties etc.

⁵⁸ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Vlada zabezpechuvatyme terytorialnu tsilisnist derzhavy ta yii suverenitet*, March 4, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/uryad-zabezpechuvatime-teritorialnu-cilisnist-derz/>

⁵⁹ Ibid.

All of these elements could have been utilized for drawing a detailed conspiracy theory without many complications – however, the discourse refrained from this. The already analyzed historical dimension was the point of reference for arguing Russia (almost) always wanted to destroy Ukraine and keep it colonized.

Despite the 1991-2014 was never directly called the *golden period* of Ukrainian-Russian relations, the discourse made this clear both implicitly and openly: “The [...] relations between Ukraine and Russia have been divided to [relations] “before” and “after” the annexation of Crimea. [...] Before the annexation of Crimea [Ukraine and Russia] actually were strategic partners. [...] And after the takeover of [Ukrainian military] bases Russia became [...] a neighbor that constitutes military and security threat – this country has become nothing else than the main factor of destabilization in political, economic and social spheres.”⁶⁰

The construction of the periodization of *the good period* and contemporary post-Crimean period in Ukrainian-Russian relations and had one crucial consequence for the discourse. Although it argued that Russia in 2014, Russia did want to Ukraine to collapse as a state, this wish was the results of Russian political elites’ malicious intentions, not because of any structural factors. The scarcely perceptible presence of the *good period* notion demonstrated that it was possible for the two states to coexist peacefully and cooperate successfully. The discourse thus argued: *it does matter to Ukraine who sits in the Kremlin*. For Ukraine, the military actions in Donbas were a war for independence; for Russia, they were a mistake by self-defeating leadership, and by no means a legitimate war, as the discourse claimed. Normalization of relations was considered in principle possible, but this would require creation of a completely new fair basis of relationship between Kyiv and Moscow.

⁶⁰ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Dvostoronni vidnosyny mizh Ukrainoiu ta RF rozdilylysia na «do» i «pislia» aneksii Krymu*, April 26, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/dvostoronni-vidnosini-mizh-ukrayinoyu-ta-rf-rozdil/>

3.3. Ukraine and the world *versus* Russia

As already demonstrated, historical aspects of the discourse analyzed in a previous subchapter were tightly intertwined with the vision of Russia after 1991: in other words, there was a degree of continuity in the way the discourse used pre-1991 and post-1991 events in order to define and redefine contemporary visions of Russia. One aspect of ascribing characteristics to the Russian Federation was concerned with comparisons of relations of Moscow and Kyiv on the one hand and Russia and other actors on the other hand. As the Ukrainian governmental discourse in 2014 – early 2015 can be undoubtedly qualified as particularly influenced by the Russian aggression, there were two relevant milestone events from the post-1991 period concerned with Russia in this context: the two Chechen wars of the 1990s and the Russian-Georgian war of 2008.

The parallel between Ukraine and Chechnya was mentioned from time to time. It characterized Chechen fighters in a rather positive way, and clearly it was the stance towards the common enemy that defined this position: “Russia lost the two Chechen wars because [Chechens] fought for their freedom. It will also loose the Ukrainian war;” “Battalion tactic group [expected to be deployed by Russia in Ukraine] were extensively used by the Russian armed forces in Chechnya [...]”^{61 62} This can be understood as a *common enemy* argument – legitimizing the fight against Moscow by arguing that Russia attacked other actors as well. At the same time, however, there was no evidence of the overwhelming interest of the discourse in this comparison. Overall, Chechnya remained a relatively rare example for legitimizing the struggle against Russia.

An explanation of this consists in the relatively bad image of modern Chechnya in Ukraine. It was mainly concerned with two factors. The first was terrorism and Islamic radicalism bound to Chechnya in the Ukrainian governmental discourse.⁶³ The second was the harshly pro-Putin current Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, which was slightly reflected

⁶¹ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Na Donbasi zahynulo maizhe 4 tysiachi rosiiskyykh viiskovykh*, September 30, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/olena-vasilyeva-na-vijskovih-yaki-ne-hochut-voyuva/>

⁶² URIADOVYI KURIER, *Ukraina hotova zustrity rosiiskyykh «myrotvortsiv»*, July 15, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/news/ukrayina-gotova-zustriti-rosijskih-mirotvorciv/>

⁶³ TSN, *Terorysty na Skhodi katuiut zaruchnykiv, yak v chasy viiny u Chechni*, July 11, 2014, <https://tsn.ua/politika/teroristi-na-shodi-katuyut-zaruchnikiv-yak-v-chasi-viyni-u-chechni-358714.html>

in Cabinet of Ministers' condemning statements: "[Kadyrov's] fighters [...] commit acts of murder, torture and other kinds of inhuman conduct with civil Ukrainian population, capture and ruin infrastructure objects, maraud and plunder."⁶⁴ The Ukrainian governmental discourse also cited various sources that claimed Chechens were actively deployed by the Russian Federation in Donbas.⁶⁵ In this way, the discourse limited the use of the *common enemy* argument. In other words, it refrained from supporting all parties that opposed Moscow. Although Russia was predominantly depicted in negative terms, it was not unconditionally negative so that all third parties opposing Moscow would be represented as allies.

However, the *common enemy* argument was extensively in the case of articulations on Georgia. Apart from the great number of articles that mentioned Georgia in one on another way (a popular topic was the fight against corruption during the rule of Mikheil Saakashvili), the parallel between Ukrainian Crimea and Donbas and Georgian South Ossetian and Abkhazia was drawn frequently. Georgia had a completely different image in the Ukrainian discourse than Chechnya: both after the 2003 Rose Revolution and around the 2008 Russian-Georgian war, it had aspirations similar to those declared by the post-revolutionary Ukrainian authorities in 2014, as some articulation implicitly pointed out. According to the discourse, Georgia was also attacked by Russia and paid a high price for its independence; *Georgians always supported Ukraine in the hard struggle against Russia* and vice versa.⁶⁶ This type of anti-Russian solidarity could be also seen in articulations on the Baltic states, especially Lithuania.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ URIADOVYI PORTAL, *Komentar shchodo pidtrymky Rosiieiu terorystychnoi diialnosti v Donetskii ta Luhanskii oblastiakh*, June 2, 2014, http://old.kmu.gov.ua/kmu/control/uk/publish/article?art_id=247355496

⁶⁵ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Na Volyni likuiut poranenykh pid Volnovakhoiu i shukaiut blahodiinu dopomohu dlia zemliakiv*, June 4, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/na-volini-likuyut-poranenih-pid-volnovahoyu-i-shuk/>

⁶⁶ URIADOVYI KURIER, «Zakhid dav Putinu pravo, i vin mozhe robyty use, shcho zamanetsia. Ukraina i Krym ye rezultatom tsiiei pozytsii» – Mykhailo Kasianov, September 18, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/news/zahid-dav-putinu-pravo-i-vin-mozhe-robiti-use-sho-/>; URIADOVYI KURIER, *U Konhresi mistsevykh vlad Rady Yevropy zasudyly dii Rosii*, March 27, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/u-kongresi-miscevih-vlad-radi-yevropi-zasudili-diy/>

⁶⁷ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Latviia ratyfikovala asotsiatsiiu Ukrainy z YeS*, July 14, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/news/latviya-ratifikuvala-asociacyu-ukrayini-z-yes/>

The shooting of the Boeing 777-200 airplane of Malaysia Airlines in July 2014 became the major event which globalized the conflict in Donbas and brought it to the world-scale agenda. This tragedy sharpened the discourses' focus on the following conceptualization: there was strong links between Russia and the *terrorists fighters* (alternatively the *separatists*) and between Ukraine and the *civilized world* respectively. The discourse constructed the two opposing sides and replicated this model with various actors implied by the *civilized world*.⁶⁸

Moreover, drawing or not drawing parallels between Ukraine and other actors opposing Russia carried an important message: *Ukraine was not alone in its fight for independence*. In one or another way, the discourse argued Russia was a threat for practically all direct European neighbors, including Russia's ally Belarus.⁶⁹ In addition to this, the discourse implied so-called *Ukrainian crisis* (alternatively *Ukrainian issue*) was not just a Ukrainian matter. It emphasized the importance of the problems for the whole world: "Ukraine is convinced that resolving the most acute problems that pose a real threat not only to European, but also global security will be facilitated by the enforcement of trust, transparency and mutual respect."⁷⁰ The message *we are not alone in this fight against Russia* was one of the most optimistic on the discourse on Russia in 2014.

This kind of messages promoted had both normative and descriptive connotations. In some instances, the discourse argued in favor of support of Ukraine from third states in the face of the Russian threat in normative terms (*actor A must/should support Ukraine and oppose Russia*). However, much more frequently it presented this support as a matter of fact, already existing, reasonable and inevitable. This referred to the support not only by states (mostly the United States, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom), but also by a number of other actors, from the UN and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the

⁶⁸ URIADOVYI KURIER, «Simka» perestala buty shchaslyvoiu, July 19, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/simka-perestala-buti-shaslivoiu/>

⁶⁹ URIADOVYI KURIER, Yak Lukashenko Moskvi vkazav, December 5, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/news/yak-lukashenko-moskvi-vkazav/>

⁷⁰ URIADOVYI PORTAL, Komentar MZS Ukrainy shchodo vidmovy RF vid uchasti u zasidanniakh OBSIE, April 10, 2014, http://old.kmu.gov.ua/kmu/control/uk/publish/article?art_id=247198546

Council of Europe to NASA to Dalai Lama.⁷¹ “Not only Ukrainians and Ukraine, against which Russia started the aggression, but also the whole world [...] is set against the ruler from Moscow. No one already believes to wanton expressions of [Russia’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations Vitaly] Churkin and does not take false messages of the Kremlin’s [PR managers].”; “And this [critical] position [on Russia’s actions] is not only Ukrainian. The international community holds to the same opinion,” – articulations of this kind were numerous and regular.⁷²

The discourse also referred to *international community* supporting Ukraine and condemning Russia’s aggression (in this case messages varied from normative to descriptive as well): “We will keep saying to the Russian government that if it continues to go the same path [...], international community, the European Union and others will make Russia pay for the violation of international laws”; “I am convinced that [...] with the help of the international community we will win this fight.”; “World community called Russia’s accusations [of Ukraine] with oppressions against ethnic Russians [...] groundless.”⁷³ Not only *international community* (the term was always used with no specifications on which exactly actors were implied) was characterized as having authority, but also enough power

⁷¹ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Vid spivpratsi z Rosiieiu u sferi kosmosu maie namir vidmovytyts NASA*, September 17, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/news/vid-spivpraci-z-rosiyeyu-u-sferi-kosmosu-maye-nami/>; URIADOVYI KURIER, *Dalai-lama: Putin vede Rosiiu do samohubstva*, September 8, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/news/dalaj-lama-putin-vede-rosiyu-do-samogubstva/>; URIADOVYI PORTAL, *Vstupne slovo Premier-ministra Ukrainy Arseniia Yatseniuka na zasidanni Uriadu 1 bereznia 2014 roku*, March 1, 2014, http://old.kmu.gov.ua/kmu/control/uk/publish/article?art_id=247063504; URIADOVYI KURIER, *U Konhresi mistsevykh vlad Rady Yevropy zasudyly dii Rosii*, March 27, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/u-kongresi-miscevih-vlad-radi-yevropi-zasudili-diy/>

⁷² URIADOVYI KURIER, *Svit proty Putina*, August 2, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/svit-proti-putina/>; <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/rosijskij-agresor-v-ovechij-shkuri/>; URIADOVYI KURIER, *Rosiiskyi ahresor v ovechii shkuri*, August 12, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/rosijskij-agresor-v-ovechij-shkuri/>

⁷³ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Arsenii YATSENIUK: «My boremosia za svoiu svobodu, za svoiu nezalezhnist, za svii suverenitet. I my nikoly ne zdamosia»*, March 13, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/news/arsenij-yacenyuk-mi-boremosya-za-svoyu-svobodu-za-/>; URIADOVYI PORTAL, *Vstupne slovo Premier-ministra Ukrainy Arseniia Yatseniuka na zasidanni Uriadu 1 bereznia 2014 roku*, March 1, 2014, http://old.kmu.gov.ua/kmu/control/uk/publish/article?art_id=247063504; URIADOVYI PORTAL, *Zbroini Syly, zavdiaky dopomozi kerivnytstva derzhavy, usoho ukrainskoho suspilstva, hotovi do vidsichi zbroinoi ahresii*, - Stepan Poltorak, November 21, 2014, http://old.kmu.gov.ua/kmu/control/uk/publish/article?art_id=247768862; URIADOVYI KURIER, *Moskva vtrachae i doviru, i povahu*, April 18, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/moskva-vtrachaye-i-doviru-i-povagu/>

and capacity to win the struggle against Russia. Specific dimensions of power, however, remained rather untouched: the discourse did not mention any

At the same time, the discourse elaborated on other dimensions of the conflict. When referring to various actors supporting Ukraine and opposing Russia's actions, the discourse used a combination of appeal to justice and threatening of Moscow. The appeal to justice was two-fold: on the one hand, the discourse emphasized the importance of international and domestic Ukraine law, and on the other hand, it highlighted moral justice. These were the major points of reference from which legitimacy of Ukraine's position towards Russia stemmed. The discourse implied that Russia lacked each of these aspects necessary for maintaining legitimacy of own behavior on the international arena.

From these, international law was understood as the most important point of reference. By far the largest part of articulations that answered implicitly or explicitly a question "Why is Ukraine right and why is Russia wrong?" brought international law as the primary point of reference for arguing that Russia's actions in relation to Ukraine were wrong: *they were bad because they were illegal*. In general, the Ukrainian governmental discourse on Russia often pointed at the legal aspects of the problematics of the Russian-Ukrainian relations. Domestic Ukrainian and, more importantly, international law served as the primary proof of illegitimacy of the Russian actions against Ukraine, whether on Ukrainian soil or not. The by far most cited document was the Budapest memorandum. Already in February 2014, the discourse cautioned about the possibility that Russia would directly violate it. Since March 2014, it numerously mentioned the Russia's aggression against Ukraine precisely as infringing Moscow's obligations resulting from the memorandum.

The discourse provided additional legitimization to the Budapest memorandum by numerously mentioning the Ukraine's huge sacrifice which it brought in exchange for the US, UK and Russia to guarantee its security, namely the abolition of the Ukrainian nuclear arsenal, for example: "Ukraine became the first and only state in the world that voluntarily abolished nuclear weapons. That involved the armory which compromised on potency only

to the power of the US and Russia.”⁷⁴ It was deliberately emphasized that Ukraine could have stayed in the club of the most powerful states of the world. As neither pressure exercised by other states or the high costs of maintaining the arsenal had been ever mentioned in articulations on Ukrainian nuclear disarmament, it was argued that Ukraine *willingly* abandoned its nuclear status. The similar actions of Kazakhstan and Belarus were ignored. Ukraine’s sacrifice was thus presented as unique and consequently was to be appreciated even more. In this context, Russia acted a party that both lacked appreciation of the Ukraine’s sacrifice and exploited the subsequent Ukraine’s vulnerability.

International law thus was deemed by the discourse an extremely powerful reference and unneglectable authority. The core of the argument consisted in the other states’ commitment to Ukraine (the word *commitment* was frequently repeated in this context), which put Ukraine into a better moral and bargaining position.⁷⁵ The Ukraine’s voluntary sacrifice only contributed to the strength of commitment of the Budapest Memorandum parties’. The UK and US were criticized as well with regard to not sticking to the Budapest Memorandum, but their criticism could not be compared to that of the Russian Federation. Presenting the Russian Federation as a state that easily infringed international law contributed to the image of Russia as disrespectful to any conventions. The discourse presented unreliability as one of the key features of modern Russia’s leadership.

In the discourse, it was not only Russia violating its legal commitments, but also it was Ukraine staying firmly on the position of respect to international law. As demonstrated herein below, this corresponds to the aspect of the Ukrainian governmental discourse that linked Russia to the concept of *non-civilized word* and differentiating from Ukraine in this respect. The discourse contained no regrets about the Budapest memorandum and giving up

⁷⁴ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Krym prokynuvsia pid praporom... referendumu*", February 28, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/krim-prokynuvsia-pid-praporom-referendumu/>; URIADOVYI KURIER, *Arsenii Yatseniuk: «Nastane chas, koly Rosiia vybachytisia pered Ukrainoiu»*, September 26, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/nastane-chas-koli-rosiya-vibachytisia-pered-ukrayin/>; URIADOVYI KURIER, *Plakha dlia peremozhciv*, November 29, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/plaha-dlya-peremozhciv/>

⁷⁵ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Yevroparlament zaklykaie daty Ukraini perspektyvu vstupu v YeS*, February 28, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/yevroparlament-zaklykaie-dati-ukrayini-perspektivu/>

own means of ensuring national security (namely at least tactical nuclear weapons), which could be heard from some Ukrainian politicians since 1994.⁷⁶

Other references to Russia violating non-named abstract *norms* (meaning precisely legal norms) were present in the discourse as well, along with citation of long lists of agreements that Russia infringed, in particular the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, the Partition Treaty on the Status and Conditions of the Black Sea Fleet etc.⁷⁷ Within this discourse, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity were understandably considered the key values. In particular, state sovereignty was tightly linked to international order and stability, and by violating Ukraine's sovereignty Russia thus challenged the existing global order.⁷⁸

The Ukrainian governmental discourse dedicated many efforts to putting the problems between Ukraine with Russia on the international agenda. According to it, the annexation of Crimea was not a private matter between Ukraine and Russia, but a resonant event of great significance for the whole world. This strengthened Ukraine's bargaining position with Western states that subsequently erected sanctions against the Russian Federation.

In discursive terms, the internationalization was done both by implicit messages as well as direct and explicit emphasis at the scale of the problem. For instance, an article published in the end of February 2014 argued: "Today the issue of destabilization [by Russia] in Crimea goes beyond the scope of a merely Ukrainian agenda and becomes a problem of destabilization of the Eurasian region, in particular Greater Europe" – the expert

⁷⁶ UNIAN, *Budapeshtskiy memorandum ne harantuie Ukraini bezpeku, dokument maie inshyi status – eks-ministr*", October 2016, <https://www.unian.ua/politics/1593222-budapeshtskiy-memorandum-ne-garantue-ukrajini-bezpeku-dokument-mae-inshiy-status-eks-ministr-yadernoji-bezpeki.html>; TSN, *Natsionalisty trebuyut vernut Ukraine yaderniy status*", August 12, 2009, <https://ru.tsn.ua/ukrayina/natsionalisty-trebuyut-vernut-ukraine-yaderniy-status.html>

⁷⁷ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Zhinky proty kulemetiv*, March 4, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/zhinki-proti-kulemetiv/>; URIADOVYI KURIER, *Pro rishennia Rady natsionalnoi bezpeky i oborony Ukrainy vid 1 bereznia 2014 roku «Pro nevidkladni zakhody shchodo zabezpechennia natsionalnoi bezpeky, suverenitetu i terytorialnoi tsilisnosti Ukrainy»*, March 4, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/pro-rishennya-radi-natsionalnoyi-bezpeki-i-oboroni/>

⁷⁸ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Krym u kamufliazhi*, March 1, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/krim-u-kamufliazhi/>

summarized.”⁷⁹ Some articulations directly pointed out the opposition of Russia and the so-called *civilized world* that criticized and did not accept Russia’s actions, for example: “The civilized world [...] did not recognize the “reconstruction of historical justice”, conducted by the Russian military in Crimea.”⁸⁰ In general, both references to the importance both international law and emphasis on the global scale of the Ukrainian-Russian conflict promoted the following message: *Russia is dangerous for the existing global order*.

⁷⁹ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Krym prokynuvsia pid praporom... referendumu*, February 28, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/krim-prokinuvsia-pid-praporom-referendumu/>

⁸⁰ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Rosiiskyi marazm mitsniie! Chy sumnivy shche ye?*, December 27, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/rosijskij-marazm-micniye-chi-sumnivi-she-ye/>

3.4. Characteristics of Russia

While it is clear that the discourse produced a mostly negative image of Russia when it came to the Ukrainian-Russian relations after 2014, many particular aspects of the image of Russia remain uncovered. This subchapter analyzes the most powerful and persistently repeated features ascribed to Russia by the discourse. An important note with respect to this is that the aforementioned negative image of Russia did not necessarily imply the discourse characterized it negatively in every single aspect.

One of the most controversial questions concerned the perceived power of Russia. The controversy consisted in opposition of two messages simultaneously produced by the discourse: *Russia is strong and dangerous so Ukraine should protect itself better* versus *Russia is weak so Ukraine will win the struggle soon*. Despite the discourse seemed to contradict itself when ascribing these particular features to Russia, there were several consistent ways in which this ascription was conducted without much controversy.

The point was to *whom* or to *what* the discourse ascribed *strength* and *weakness* and in which ways. As analysis demonstrated, the discourse conducted securitization of Russia through emphasizing Russian military capabilities – could threaten Ukraine’s independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. In combination with articulations on Russia’s malicious intentions, the discourse produced a message that aimed mobilizing the Ukrainian public against Russia.

As opposed to the image of Russia as a strong foe in terms of military might, the discourse regularly pointed at Ukraine as a victim of Moscow’s strength and bad intentions. For example, an article named “Women against machine guns” an image of weak Ukraine, impersonated by peaceful Ukrainian soldiers in Crimea with little ammunition, attacked by well-equipped Russian forces, using all means to instigate violent actions of the Ukrainian side. Interestingly, despite the name, the article spoke only of Ukrainian soldiers, not Ukrainian women – the name was picked deliberately to emphasize the emotional side of the conflict in spite of the lack of relevant context.⁸¹

⁸¹ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Zhinky proty kulemetiv*, March 4, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/zhinki-proti-kulemetiv/>

The same article argued: “The aggressor can rattle the sabre as much as he wants to, but he will never understand those who protect the homeland. And for that, in spite of the uneasy situation, we, Ukrainian, have to now: we will certainly win. We will win, because we have the truth on our side.”⁸² The strength of Ukraine, therefore, consisted not in brute military power – it was a matter of reasoning in immaterial moral categories. According to the discourse, Russia could neither understand nor overcome this. Importantly, the image of Russia’s strength only contributed to the image of its aggressiveness. Over the cover period, the discourse produced no articulations which would ascribe power to Russia in a positive manner – for Ukraine, the strength of modern Russia was always a problem.

Ascription of military strength in the discourse, however, did not mean Russia was automatically perceived strong and effective in other dimension. Characterization of Russia’s (in-)effectiveness in the Ukrainian governmental discourse was highly contextualized: in the context of military, Russia was still characterized as very effective (this was also completely consistent with the ascription of strength to Russia). However, in most of other aspects, Russia was considered highly unsuccessful – in particular, the political and economic spheres of activity were deemed to be concerned with this.

In this context, a note is needed. In various discourses, effectiveness and other kinds of success in ruling the state (conceptualized in the discourse as significant economy growth, increase in citizens’ level of life, good healthcare and other kinds of social welfare, the lack of corruption, the rule of law, democratic freedoms) do not necessarily constitute universal values. A discourse may view nations and states as ineffective and lacking most of the aforementioned aspects, but describe this feature as a not necessarily negative phenomenon.

Even corruption could be characterized by it in positive terms – for instance, as means of maintenance of good relations with friends and relatives.⁸³ Being not able to keep organization at a good level meant denial of material values for the good of spiritual values. For citizens, the state’s inability to provide good life conditions primarily meant their ability to survive without luxury and third party’s help, which demonstrated their strength and was

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Here, corruption – meaning activities involving bribery.

thus considered positive. In this way, a discourse does not necessarily refer to ineffectiveness in negative terms and there exists a plurality of options in which the discourse can characterize successful state administration.

Positive characterization of Russia's leadership failures, however, was not the case of the Ukrainian governmental discourse. It deployed articulations on Russia's bad and good organization in a skillful manner that altogether produced several descriptive and normative messages. *Russia was ineffective in organizing internal political life in a good way and own economy in order to provide all citizens with good standards of life.* The discourse, however, appealed rarely to particular examples (such as, for instance, corruption scandals, financial mismanagement, yet another Russia's rocket fall), mostly speaking about Russia's failures in an abstract manner. There was nothing to be praised for in these kinds of faults, as the discourse claim. Just like the discourse did not promote an image of a today's rich Ukraine, neither it promoted an image of a successful Russia.

Moreover, even some strong sides of the Russian Federation were captured in negative terms. The discourse argued that Russian higher salaries, lucrative for many Ukrainians, were only a result of its oil and gas exports, and not of the state's smart financial and monetary policies. Russian economy was misbalanced and unstable. Russian authorities were not able to secure fulfillment of basic needs of all Russian population. The discourse also ignored Russian higher GDP, GDP per capita and economy growth rate than the same markers for Ukraine. This had a strong normative message as a result: since Ukrainians wanted to live in a prosperous state that would have sustainable growth, Russia was not a valid option for foreign policy orientation, and Ukraine should not become closer to Russia politically and economically.⁸⁴

There was one sector of Russia's economy that was considered very effective: the export of hydrocarbons. However, just like in case with the Russian military, this strength of Russia was understood as dangerous for Ukraine, given the Ukraine's high dependence on

⁸⁴ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Sanktsii proty Rosii taky spratsiuvaly*, November 12, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/news/sankciyi-proti-rosiyi-taki-spracyuvali/>

Russian gas. Most articulations securitized this issue with one normative message: *Ukraine must stay united, as Russia represents a major energy threat for Ukraine.*

Unlike the Russian opposition discourse, the Ukrainian governmental discourse showed little interest in corruption in Russia's highest political and economic circles: although the discourse referred to the bad state of affairs regarding this, it was a topic of rather minor significance. Attempts to delegitimize Russia's authorities internally mostly concerned bad economic performance and the lack of political freedoms. The latter was considered to be one of Russia's weak sides. For the Ukrainian governmental discourse it was easy to contraposition Ukraine and Russia in favor of the former. The discourse considered freedom, plurality, and tolerance as values intrinsic to Ukraine. *The rule of Yanukovych was a deviation, and Euromaidan only returned Ukraine to its more condition in which the country enjoyed the aforementioned political freedoms.* This was contrasted to the case of Russia, for which the lack of political freedoms was considered to be rather a rule than an exception. Against Ukraine, Russia looked closed, unfree and non-tolerant. The political order was characterized as oppressive towards own citizens and newcomers. The discourse contained no claims that this state of affairs was *natural* for Russia, but strongly condemned it – in other words, while the at the normative level the discourse argued there must be more freedom in Russia, at the descriptive level it claimed this had been hardly the case ever in the Russian history.

In this way, the Ukrainian governmental discourse systematically characterized the Russian state as weak and ineffective in almost every single aspect but the military. The image of a poor state struggling with numerous economic and social problems and unable to satisfy the needs of own population was complemented by ascription of features of an authoritarian illiberal regime. This pointed to one of the main problems of Russia, which the discourse considered its political elites.

Another aspect of characterizing Russia is approaching to it as to a bad or good example (not) to be followed by Ukraine. The Ukrainian governmental discourse condemned Russian actions a lot; nevertheless, this did not automatically mean the discourse deemed Russia was acting badly for itself. The key element in this context is the understanding of the Russian national interest promoted by the discourse.

As already mentioned, the discourse considered the Russian national interest to be objectively different from what the Russian leadership deemed it to be. Only some aspects of policies pursued by the Russian leadership were considered as simultaneously beneficial for Russia and harmful for Ukraine. The most prominent example were measures aiming at protection of the Russian language outside of Russia (and in Ukraine in particular).⁸⁵ In this way, the discourse considered only some cultural policies pursued by Russia to be relatively fair and worth of copying for Ukraine. The rest of the policies were considered mistaken and harmful to all parties involved – in particular, not only to Ukraine, but also to Russia itself.

This concerned a question whether Russia's actions could be *understood* easily regardless of their condemnation. Demonstrating the *understanding* of Russia's aggression against Ukraine would serve a legitimization of the Russia's action and even qualification of them as different than *aggression* – this, for example, was the case of the so-called *Putinsverstehers* (Western politicians who claimed to understand Russia in the conflict with Ukraine even when declaring condemnation of the former). Just like with defining whether Russia could serve as a good example for Ukraine, the Ukrainian governmental discourse clearly argued it did not understand Russia, for example: “I do not understand the positions of Russian politicians, including those representatives of the authorities, who make narrow-minded decisions, for example, on [massive issue of Russian] passports [in Crimea].”⁸⁶

One of the most significant points implicitly made in the discourse was about *archaism* of Russia. It was manifested in characterizing Russia as lagging behind the rest of the world and thus complemented the model *Ukraine and the world versus Russia* analyzed herein before. Russia's archaism was a question of both aims and means. The formed concerned the Russian old-fashioned desire to exert control over neighbouring states articulating the concept of close neighborhood, which comprised the former Soviet belongings. This, however, stemmed not only from the Soviet times, but also from the Russian imperial rule or even earlier. The historical continuity Muscovy–Russian Empire–Soviet Union–Russian Federation did not come into question in the Ukrainian governmental

⁸⁵ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Ukrainska knyha konsoliduvatyme suspilstvo*, July 29, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/ukrayinska-kniga-konsoliduvatime-suspilstvo/>

⁸⁶ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Krym prokynuvsia pid praporom... referendumu*, February 28, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/krim-prokinuvsia-pid-praporom-referendumu/>

discourse – this was perceived as a matter of fact. In some cases, the discourse highlighted archaism of Russia and its previous state forms per se: “[Putin’s people in Donbas] restore the empire (equally backward against the world Tsarist, Soviet or Russian).”⁸⁷ The citation of the demands of time highlighted Russia’s archaism at best: Russia lagged significantly not only behind some individual countries, but also behind the *Zeitgeist*.

Articulations on the other side of archaism claimed: *even if the ambitious old-fashioned geopolitical aims of Russia could be understood, the means could not be considered as appropriate in the modern world*. Unlike soft power (the extensive use of which was also frequently criticized by the discourse), military aggression was completely unacceptable and extremely old-fashioned. This type of articulations were complemented by statements on ineffective Russian economy and dire political system, analyzed herein below. Altogether, this produced an image of Russia as a backward country that isolated itself.

As the discourse argued, Russia could use any means for attaining its aims. This message involved negative assessment, as the means used included those deemed immoral. Since March 2014, the discourse contained multiple accusations of the Russian Federation with preparing provocations against Ukraine, the West and the global order: for example, it was claimed Russian military commandment could easily kill Russian soldiers for the sake of legitimizing the injection of more Russian forces into Crimea.⁸⁸ Ukraine, as distinct, was presented to behave in accordance with internationally accepted norms and law, for example: “The Ukrainian side responds with diplomatic rightness to provocations from the side of Russian military. [Russia attacked Ukraine], and we do not react on provocations and do not resort to power.”⁸⁹

The *illegitimate aims of Russia* were frequently represented in articulations on Ukraine’s dependence on Russia, which was another big topic in the Ukrainian governmental discourse. It was rarely scrutinized in details, but the number of articles referring to it in one

⁸⁷ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Donetsko-luhanske zadzverkallia*, May 15, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/donecko-luganske-zadzverkallya/>

⁸⁸ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Zhinky proty kulemetiv*, March 4, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/zhinki-proti-kulemetiv/>

⁸⁹ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Vlada zabezpechuvatyme terytorialnu tsilisnist derzhavy ta yii suverenitet*, March 4, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/uryad-zabezpechuvatime-teritorialnu-cilisnist-derz/>

or another way was more than enough to demonstrate the Ukrainian governmental discourse took the problem seriously. Indeed, the first step was to recognize economic dependence on Russia as a problem in the first place. Within the covered period, this was done already in February 2014, whereas articles critically spoke of Ukraine asking for loans from Russia.⁹⁰ While this structural issue has been present in Ukraine for decades, the most recent memory of a *Russian loan* was of the one given to the president Yanukovich, as it was perceived, as a political bribe – to suppress the Maidan protests and to keep Ukraine in Russia’s orbit.⁹¹ The way in which the discourse characterized Ukraine’s dependence on Russia as a necessarily negative phenomenon had two consequences. On the one hand, Russia was perceived as having power over Ukraine in this sense. Secondly, Russia was considered to be willing to exploit this dependence against Ukraine.

Russia’s *archaism* and *backwardness* were in perfect step with the opposition of Russia to the so-called *civilized world*. By using words and phrases *civilization*, *(non)-civilized*, and *in a (non)-civilized manner* the discourse referred to the same model *Russia versus the world*, but specified it and provided additional reasons for delegitimization of policies pursued by Russia: “[Putin] practically made the civilized world face a threat of being involved into a third world war.”⁹² In this model, both the *civilized world* and *civilized Ukraine* always constituted the *Other* of the *non-civilized Russia*: “As a democratic civilized country, we [Ukraine] have only one solution to this [problem] – diplomatic measures. [...] Unfortunately, [unlike Russia], only the Ukrainian side sticks to the commitment pledged to in Geneva.” Just like *archaism*, *non-civilization*⁹³ of Russia was a question of means deployed by Russia: while the discourse presented Ukraine to act peacefully, Russia was essentially aggressive (including first military confrontations in Crimea).⁹⁴

⁹⁰ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Hra u dyktatora*, February 26, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/gra-u-diktatora/>

⁹¹ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Zarubizhna presa pro vybory: Ukraina zavdaie udaru po Rosii*, May 26, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/news/zarubizhna-presa-pro-vibori-ukrayina-zavdaye-udaru/>

⁹² URIADOVYI KURIER, *Rosiyskyi marazm mitsniie! Chy sumnivy shche ye?*, December 27, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/rosijskij-marazm-michniye-chi-sumnivi-she-ye/>

⁹³ (Non)-civilization – meaning a characteristics (Ukrainian *tsyvilizovanist*), not an entity (Ukrainian *tsyvilizatsiia*).

⁹⁴ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Polkovnyk Yulii MAMChUR: «Pislia vsoho perezhytoho praktychno v usikh simiakh stosunky staly mitsnishymy»*, April 26, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/polkovnik-yulij-mamchur-pislya-vsogo-perezhitogo-p/>

In general, aggressiveness of Russia was systematically emphasized in the Ukrainian discourse. This was done not only through referring to *Russian aggression* and presenting Ukraine and other states as victims of Russia, but also through contrasting Ukraine and Russia's respective foreign policies, which was especially visible in articulations on the annexation of Crimea. The Ukrainian governmental discourse recognized Russian claims on Crimea as illegitimate and struggled with various Russian discourses that tried to legitimize the annexation.

At the same time, the discourse the transfer of Crimea under the rule of the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic as Ukraine's weak point – Russian discourses claimed it was a spontaneous and groundless decision of Nikita Khrushchev. The Ukrainian governmental discourse's answer was the transfer of Taganrog and Rostov oblasts' under the Russian rule – as the discourse argued, they were transferred with no legitimate grounds.⁹⁵ Here, the crucial difference between Ukraine and Russia was that Ukraine was a non-revisionist state: the discourse did promote an idea of regaining control over *lost territories* and refrained from calling them in this way. The examples of loss of Taganrog and Rostov were used solely in the context of struggle with Russian discourse over the Crimean question. In this way, Ukraine and Russia were differentiated from each other by contrasting their aims. While Russia was represented aggressive and revisionist, Ukraine was characterized as peaceful and compliant with the international law in spite of the possibility for it to lodge a claim to Russia (which Ukraine *voluntarily never did*).

3.5. Who was implied by the concept *Russia*

Researching what the discourse means by *Russia* implies not only looking at what aspects are concerned with the concept, but also looking at the concept itself and finding out which exactly actors the discourse refers to. This is not always possible to see as many texts do not contain any explanations on what they mean by *Russia*, and simply use the name or a

⁹⁵ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Vid starodubskoi rizni do putinskykh «narodnykh respublik»*, July 26, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/vid-starodubskoyi-rizni-do-putinskih-narodnih-resp/>; URIADOVYI KURIER, Oleksandr PONOMARIV: «*Naspravdi my rizni narody...*», December 16, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/oleksandr-ponomariv-naspravdi-mi-rizni-narodi/>

synonym⁹⁶. However, analysis of context in which the texts operate allows identifying this. Moreover, a number of texts analyzed distinguish between different actors that fall under the concept of “Russia” and, more importantly, characterize them in similar or different ways. This subchapter thus explores which actors are characterized and how exactly.

Even initial analysis allows identifying the number of actors, which were referred to as *Russia* or *Russian* in the Ukrainian governmental discourse. These were various bodies of state administration from all three branches of power (president, presidential administration, the State Duma, the Council of the Federation, the government, law enforcement agencies, Russian citizens (both politically engaged and non-engaged), various political parties and movements, and Russian military bodies.

The Ukrainian governmental discourse was indirectly involved with defining the concept *Russia* while referring to particular individuals or groups who featured in texts and in this way served as representatives of Russia (whether officially or non-officially). This is one of the crucial points of this work, since the way this central concept of the discourse is defined bears significant normative consequences. In other words, relevant policies may vary depending on how the discourse defines *Russia*. For instance, if the discourse does not distinguish between Putin, all Russian citizens and even ethnic Russians (regardless of their citizenship), the latter two groups are much more likely to become the target of punitive Ukrainian policies, and vice versa.

The discourse clearly argued that not all Russian citizens supported Putin and praised proofs of this. It must be noted that the contrapositioning precisely *Putin* and *Russian citizens* took place the most frequently. In particular, the so-called Marches for Peace that were held in Moscow in March and September 2014 were debated in the discourse in quite positive terms.⁹⁷ Opposition leaders were mentioned rarely, but articles did specify them. A general message was about massive discontent with Putin’s policies. The prominent opposition leader, advocate and anti-corruption activist Alexei Navalnyi was never mentioned in the

⁹⁶ What is deemed to be the synonym to *Russia* can also provide a lot of information as well, which is also explored in this work.

⁹⁷ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Ne vsi. I ne odnym myrom...*, March 15, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/ne-vsi-i-ne-odnim-mirom/>; URIADOVYI KURIER, *U Moskvi dozvolily Marsh Myru*, September 2011, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/news/u-moskvi-dozvolili-marsh-miru/>

discourse during the covered period, possibly due to his controversial statements on Crimea and was not considered as having sufficiently strong pro-Ukrainian position. As distinct, another outstanding opposition leader Boris Nemtsov was multiply mentioned and even quoted.⁹⁸ The same concerned the veteran of the Russian liberal movement Valeriia Novodvorskaia, the strongly pro-Ukrainian position of whom was emphasized.⁹⁹

One more important subcategory of the *Russian citizens* were opposition-minded celebrities who were not politicians. It became especially relevant in the context of a sending a collective open letter to Putin as a means of protest against the annexation of Crimea, which was signed by hundreds of Russian citizens. The list of signers contained many people prominent in the Russian and post-Soviet public life.¹⁰⁰

Quotations of Russian artists were used in other contexts as well – for example, the famous Russian musician Andrei Makarevich was quoted by *Uriadovyi kurier*: “I haven’t remembered such unbridled propaganda since the times of Brezhnev”¹⁰¹. The discourse also replicated an open letter of the musician to president Putin which he wrote in August 2014.¹⁰² Another popular Russian musician Diana Arbenina was also referred to in the discourse¹⁰³

The discourse argued it was common people who were disappointed with the Putin’s regime and Russian soldiers sent to die to Donbas who were angry with the Russian leadership: “[A Russian soldier captured by Ukrainian forces] said that [he would rather stay at home]. “I think that Ukraine is an independent republic. If it has some problems over there, let them get solved there [without Russia’s involvement]”; “[...] money that year after year

⁹⁸ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Moi spivchuttia, pane prezidente!*, September 24, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/moi-spivchuttia-pane-prezidente/>; URIADOVYI KURIER, *Vtorhnennia rosiiskykh viiskovykh v Ukrainu – tse pidstava dlia impichmentu Putina*, – Nemtsov, August 28, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/news/vtorgnennia-rosiiskih-vijskovih-v-ukrayinu-ce-pids/>;

⁹⁹ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Rosiia poproshchaliasia z Valeriiu Novodvorskoiu*, July 16, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/news/v-moskvi-proshalisya-z-valeriyeyu-novodvorskoyu/>; URIADOVYI KURIER, *Kolys i Rosiia usvidomyt vtratu...*, July 15, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/kolis-i-rosiya-usvidomit-vtratu/>

¹⁰⁰ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Zvernennia predstavnykiv rosiiskoi intelihtentsii do narodu Ukrainy*, August 28, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/news/zvernennia-predstavnikiv-rosijskoyi-inteligencyi/>

¹⁰¹ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Kremlivske zombuvannia i yoho naslidky*, March 5, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/kremlivske-zombuvannia-i-jogo-naslidki/>

¹⁰² URIADOVYI KURIER, *Andrii Makarevych zvernuvsia do Volodymyra Putina z vidkrytym lystom*, August 26, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/news/andrij-makarevich-zvernuvsya-do-volodimira-putina/>

¹⁰³ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Diana ARBENINA: «Ja potrapyla v spysok vorohiv Rosii»*, September 5, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/news/diana-arbenina-ya-potrapila-v-spisok-vorogiv-rosiy/>

have been not given for solving acute problems of common Russians, but were transferred for deceiving and ideological *zombieing* [meaning *propaganda*] of a common resident of Crimea.”; “Will this state of affairs [after the US and EU sanctions against Russia] be advantageous for the Russian businesses, including oligarchs? Of course, not. Not to mention common Russians, whose life will start worsening significantly...” “No one has called the Kremlin chiefs “brothers” – what kind of brothers are they to [Ukrainians]? But [relations of nations] is a different matter. How many suffering people live [outside Moscow], while those in Moscow roll in clover. [...] Nations are not at fault for their chiefs. Grandees start wars, and common people pay with blood.”¹⁰⁴

This had several consequences for how the discourse was subsequently structured. Firstly, non-nationwide support of Putin challenged internal legitimacy of the Putin’s regime and Putin as a president himself. This was especially significant with the use of opinions of Russian domestic actors. Legitimacy of the Putin’s regime was thus questioned not only by a non-objective third party (Ukraine), but by those ruled by the regime. This concerned the struggle with the Russian mainstream media and governmental discourse.

Secondly, this meant that Russian citizens were essentially treated as *normal* (or rather as corresponding to what the discourse deemed as a norm). Consequently, there were no grounds for discrimination of Russians just on the grounds of their citizenship. In the Ukrainian context, this primarily meant Russians, if not (openly) pro-Putin, could visit and even live and work in Ukraine without additional complexities. This had impact, for instance, for Russian citizens serving in the Ukrainian army or Mariya Gaidar, a Russian citizen who became an assistant of Mikheil Saakashvili at the Odesa regional administration.

Thirdly, this meant that the Ukrainian governmental discourse was not nationalist. Here, nationalism is understood as an ideology that views the world through the lens of nation and considers nation to be the primary subject of international relations and domestic politics:

¹⁰⁴ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Aty-baty, dyversanty...*, August 27, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/ati-bati-diversanti/>; URIADOVYI KURIER, *Utratu informatsiinoho suverenitetu bulo splanovano*, April 17, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/utratu-informacijnogo-suverenitetu-bulo-splanovano/>; URIADOVYI KURIER, *Bumeranh zavzhdy povertaietsia do yoho vlasnyka*, March 4, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/bumerang-zavzhdi-povertayetsya-do-jogo-vlasnika/>; URIADOVYI KURIER, *Leonid Horlach: “U Moskvi chymalo ye maidaniv, shcho kolys od hnivu zatsvitut*, June 14, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/leonid-gorlach-u-moskvi-chimalo-ye-majdaniv-sho-ko/>

“Nation [is] a *homogeneous* cultural unit, characterised by distinct customs, social practices, moral values, modes of interpersonal relationships [...] [emphasis added].”¹⁰⁵ A nationalist discourse is thus expected to refer to all citizens and state bodies in the same manner. This, however, was not the case of the Ukrainian governmental discourse, as there was no presumed unity of the Russian state and the Russian people. The war between Ukraine and Russia was not a war between two nations, a completely natural phenomenon as considered in a far-right discourse, but a war of the Russian elites against the Ukrainian nation. Consequently, in this way the Ukrainian discourse tried to portray Ukraine as tolerant. This constituted one of the differences which the discourse argued existed between Ukraine and Russia.

This differentiation between common people and elites, however understandable and obvious, was far from self-evident or automatic for a Ukrainian discourse. In Ukrainian nationalist discourses on Russia, multiple generalizations took place; they did not make any difference between a common Russian citizen and the Russian president, thereby accusing Russian people in the same manner like the Russian elites. The Ukrainian governmental discourse, as distinct, in most cases draw a quite clear division line.¹⁰⁶

Another point was that Ukraine did not fight against Russia, but just against the Russian government. This was a message targeting Russian citizens (of course, not directly through *Uriadovyi kurier*, but rather through Ukrainian media in Russian and statements of Ukrainian politicians). The Ukrainian governmental discourse struggled with the Russian discourse that often portrayed Ukraine as willing to destroy Russia, discriminate or even exterminate Russians, annex some Russian territory. The Ukrainian discourse argued the aim of Ukraine was to protect itself from Putin, and since Putin never equaled the whole Russia, common Russians by no means were not the Ukrainian target in the war in Donbas.

The notion of innocence of common Russian citizens was potentially in conflict with the bad perception of the highest Russian political leadership. This gap was filled by

¹⁰⁵ PAREKH, B. (1995): Ethnocentricity of the nationalist discourse, *Nations and Nationalism* 1 (1), p. 32,

¹⁰⁶ DONBASS UA, *Deputat VO «Svoboda»: Myrotvorchoi misii z rosiiianamy u skladi v Ukraini buty ne mozhe*, November 29, 2017, <http://donbass.ua/news/ukraine/2017/11/29/deputat-vo-svoboda-mirotvorchoji-misiji-z-rosijanami-u-skladi-v-ukrajini-buti-ne-mozhe.html>

references to overwhelming propaganda with which the political elites of the Russian Federation treated own population. Precisely the word “propaganda” was used on a massive scale in the discourse. This word was not used in a formal context with neutral value, like in Soviet newspapers, but bore a clearly negative and strong meaning.¹⁰⁷: “What is going on in collective consciousness of Russians is a disease, a great manipulation of the beginning of the 21st century. Nobody could expect anything like this. It was also unexpected that after the annexation of Crimea, the rate of Putin – the other way round, it increased by approximately 20%. If this is not a lies, it only confirms that Russians are in lethargic sleep and do not understand, which kind of danger of Putin’s plague threatens themselves.”¹⁰⁸

In this was, the discourse delegitimized the Russian authorities by arguing the stance of common Russians towards Ukraine was radically different from that of Putin and the Russian government. If this was not the case and the Ukrainian governmental discourse reflected intertextuality with Russian discourses by referring to strong support of Putin, the discourse argued the Russian population temporarily obscured by false Russian media. It was propaganda that was the reason of many Russian citizens’ support of the Putin’s policies, not their intrinsic nationwide wish to destroy Ukraine.

¹⁰⁷ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Zhodna dyktatura ne prydushyt rozumu*, March 15, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/zhodna-diktatura-ne-pridushit-rozumu/>; URIADOVYI KURIER, *Do brata zi zbroieiu ne khodiat!*, March 19, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/do-brata-zi-zbroyeyu-ne-hodyat>

¹⁰⁸ URIADOVYI KURIER, *Valentyn BADRAK: «Nam treba psykholohichno hotuvatysia do zastosuvannia zbroi na kordonakh»*, April 9, 2014, <https://ukurier.gov.ua/uk/articles/valentin-badrak-nam-treba-psyhologichno-gotuvatysy/>

4. Conclusion

The Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014 had a profound impact on how Russia was represented in the Ukrainian governmental discourse. As this research demonstrates, Russia and Ukrainian-Russian relations were an important topic in the discourse. Russia was characterized in a rather consistent manner, as relatively few articulations were in any way contradictory to the general trends of how Russia was designated. In this way, the Ukrainian governmental discourse was rather solid when it came to considering Russia.

In the course of research, several important presumptions were refuted. In particular, one of the most prominent results of the work is analysis of how the Ukrainian governmental discourse understood actors staying behind the concept *Russia*. As demonstrated, the discourse referred not only to *Russia* as a grand concept – this was often the case, but in some instances, the discourse elaborated on different actors behind *Russia*. The discourse spoke of *Russian citizens*, *Russian politicians from the opposition*, *Russian opposition-minded celebrities*, *Russia soldiers*. As the discourse presented, the most of the actors staying behind the concept *Russia* ever mentioned were in opposition to the leadership of Russia, impersonated by the highest authorities and elites, like the Council of the Federation, State Duma, Government and especially President Putin. The discursive construction of the opposition of a number of actors towards the Russian leadership disrupted legitimacy of the regime itself.

The Russian leadership, as the Ukrainian governmental discourse argued, was responsible for misperception of the Russian national interest, which *in reality* was compatible with the national interest of Ukraine. The discourse claimed Russia *needed* strong and independent Ukraine as a good partner and neighbor for its own benefit. By misinterpreting the Russian national interest, Russian authorities harmed both Ukraine and Russia at the same time. The theoretically possible compatibility of Ukrainian and Russian national interests, presented and promoted in the Ukrainian governmental discourse, meant that Ukraine and Russia could become good partners, but this would require a radical change in Russia's policies. Based on this, it is possible to establish that the Ukrainian governmental

discourse did not promote unconditional antagonism towards Russia. According to the messages the discourse featured, Russia and Ukraine could have coexisted peacefully and cooperated successfully.

The Ukrainian governmental discourse also used rhetoric close to those of conspiracy theories when it came to discussing national security of Ukraine (e.g. speculations on plans of Russia to destroy the Ukrainian statehood). This, certainly, is another sign of the discourse's aspiration to define temporal continuity of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, and to link the events of 2014 to previous actions of Moscow against Ukraine, Georgia, Lithuania and other countries. This link, however, was not overwhelmingly strong. There were more articulations that argued in 2014 Russia destroyed the previously good Ukrainian-Russian relations than those articulations that argue that Russia was always keen to eradicate everything Ukrainian, and the Ukrainian state in the first place. The *good period* of the Ukrainian-Russian relations was understood to have taken place from 1991 until 2014. The Ukrainian discourse largely ignored numerous trade wars against Ukraine, ambiguous aggressive political statements, other kinds of pressure exercised on Kyiv by the Kremlin, devoting insignificant amount of attention to these phenomena.

However, historical dimension of the Ukrainian governmental discourse on Russia was different. It focused on Ukrainian-Russian relations from the Middle Ages till the breakup of the Soviet Union (which meant the discourse constructed continuity between various state and non-state formations for Russia and Ukraine accordingly). The discourse used this dimension in many contexts, including in explaining the current relations between Kyiv and Moscow. Within its framework, the Ukrainian governmental discourse mostly referred to a postcolonial model of understanding of the relations, in which Ukraine used to be a colony while Russia used to be a metropole. This model was exploited extensively in the historical dimension with very few exceptions. Moreover, this kind of relationship between Ukraine and Russia was characterized as essentially unfair and illegitimate. At the same time, the model was not applied the aforementioned 1991-2014 period, which was considered as the first time Ukraine and Russia interacted on a more or less fair basis. Aggressive policies towards Ukraine pursued by the Russian leadership in 2014 were often

compared to those before 1991, and thus their legitimacy was as low as those pursued towards Ukraine in various forms by Russian Tsars, emperors, or Soviet leaders.

The Ukrainian governmental discourse also constructed a discursive model in which Russia's legitimacy on the international arena was challenged. This model referred to many actors (mostly but not exclusively states) as opposing Russian aggression. The discourse argued Russia's actions were condemned around the globe and refrained from mentioning even slightest signs of support of Russia. Within this model, the position of the Ukrainian government was underpinned not only by legitimacy provided by Ukrainian citizens, but also by a great number of third actors, which were often not directly affected by the Russian aggression. International law served as the primary source of reference for bringing additional evidence of legitimacy of Ukraine's stance towards Russia. The discourse contrasted Russia and Ukraine by arguing that Moscow bluntly violated a number of pieces of international treaties as well as moral norms and Kyiv always stood on the position of respect towards the existing international rule-based order.

The Ukrainian governmental discourse thus ascribed several crucial characteristics to Russia: *revisionism*, *archaism*, and *non-civilization* (the two latter stemming from the discursive model of opposition of Russia and the rest of the world). *Archaism* of Russia consisted not only in its underdeveloped economy and political institutions, but also in the aims pursued and means used for attaining them. As the discourse argued, both Russian aims and means belonged to the past and could be used in the modern world no longer. Only a state that lacked *civilization* could pursue such aggressive policies with the use of unacceptable means.

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