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POST-SOVIET TRANSIT BETWEEN REVOLUTION AND RESTORATION

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The recent history of post-Soviet societies is often described with the use of the transition metaphor. The image of movement, changing the place and situation, was foundational for the social imagination of new nations. This idea of looking for novelty and new beginnings legitimized the dissolution of the USSR and many state- and economy-related experiments. The period between 1990 and 1993 was indeed a revolution with strong citizen/bourgeois, neoliberal/capitalist, and nationalist/collectivist intentions.

However, the post-Soviet social imagination has had its own contradictions. The revolutionary quest for new forms of social, political and economic life paradoxically coincided with the collective will to ‘return’ to some ‘normal history’ and/or ‘civilized world’ (these expressions were the buzzwords in the late Soviet – early post-Soviet media). The idea of return also had a transitory intention: from the Soviet dead end, Russian, Ukrainian or Lithuanian societies had to go back to their natural, ‘correct’ past. Leaders of the Baltic countries, Ukraine and Russia were calling to republican experiments launched by the February revolution in 1917 as
their founding moments. This way the revolutionary creativity of 1991 was limited by the strategy of restoration, intention to use forms and models of the first half of the twentieth century for post-Soviet societies entering the twenty-first century.

Another limitation for our societies’ imagination was posed by the idea of copying. The revolutionary possibilities of 1991 were also seen as a time when transfer of Western experience can guarantee democratic and economic success for the new Eastern Europe and Western Eurasia (see: Stefes, 2006: 10-11; Gaidar, 2010: 17ff; Kordonsky, 2010: 10).

Neither transition through transfer, nor transit via return were the strategies that delivered the promised success and normality. New forms of collective life took over the post-Soviet societies where neopatrimonialism, patronal networks, mafia-state, neo-imperialist politics, neo-sovietism, neo-nazism, and demodernization became as strong as the democratic tendency. The Baltic countries, in spite of strong EU impact, still have considerable obstacles to functioning democracy (Maciukaite-Zviniene, 2009: 29-30). The other twelve post-Soviet republics were slowly losing Perestroika’s emancipatory impulse (Hale, 2016). Even the most ‘democratic’ countries out of these twelve remain in the state of semi-freedom and weak association with the EU (Nodia, Cenusa & Minakov, 2017). The situation with democracy and the rule of law in the six de facto post-Soviet states is even worse (Fischer, 2016: 5-7). This unexpected current post-Soviet social reality was created by an interplay of revolutionary and restorationist strategies.

For details of the February revolutionary legacy in the twentieth century see: Minakov, 2017.
In this volume of the Ideology and Politics Journal we present a collection of research papers demonstrating the results of the post-Soviet transit.

In the first article, Pavel Skigin joins the debate about the nature of Putin’s regime in Russia. He supports those scholars who use the Weberian concept of neopatrimonialism for the description of Russia’s political system. Due to this, Skigin manifests how the system functions through the establishment and evolution of the patron-client hierarchy, different forms of rent extraction and conditional property. He also adds to the study of the post-Soviet “power vertical” using a wide range of examples in Russia.

Andreas Umland’s article focuses on ideologies that cooperate and compete in today’s Russia. Umland claims that the radicalization of Putin’s regime in 2013-15 can be explained not only through economic interests of the ruling elites, but also by the dominant anti-western and neo-imperialist beliefs of influential political players. The author shows that Putin’s regime combines reactionary politics with the elements of Zhyrinovsky’s and Dugin’s ‘revolutionary imperialism.’ This ideological cocktail is spread among the elites and society, and thus it defines Russian public discourse and foreign policy.

Jennifer Carroll’s study shows how propaganda returned into post-Soviet Russia and Ukraine. The author studies how Russian propaganda launched ‘the counter-narratives’ against Ukrainian popular and nationalist causes in 2013-2014. Carroll shows how these counter-narratives accomplished their goals by generating faith in false objectivity of the images that negatively brand Euromaidan events and participants.
article provides an analysis of the post-Soviet social imagination and the practices of its manipulation.

Yuriy Matsuievsky and Oleksandr Kashynsky offer a study of populism in Poland, Romania and Ukraine. They tested a theory that populism becomes influential in a society with weak democratic institutions. In the case of Poland and Romania, the authors prove, rapid economic liberalization provoked lasting social discontent in significant part of population that, in turn, invested into paternalistic and nationalistic right-wing populist movements. In Ukrainian case, social populism was provoked by the lack of reforms; in that case populism was growing into both right and left political movements. In all three cases, as the authors conclude, strong populist movements increase the democratic deficit and add to the growth of populist sympathies.

Giuseppe Iurato offered a social psychological method for the analysis of modernizing and demodernizing societies. In his article, Iurato applied Mead’s symbolic interactionism to manifest how the dominance of the Generalized Other in modern institutions functions in the forms of automatisms and ‘recursions in the past.’ His model seems to be applicable to the further analysis of postcolonial societies, including the post-Soviet ones, that live on the margins of modernity.

This volume concludes with the sociological study of Ukraine’s democratic transit in the conditions of geopolitically fragmented society. Oleksandr and Volodymyr Reznik demonstrate that mutually exclusive geopolitical orientations of Ukrainian population are connected to the contradictions between the two big collectives oriented at national identity
the Ukrainian language as a single state language, democratic and market values, on one side, and those opting for rapprochement with Russia, Russian identity, support for bilingualism, negative attitudes toward a multiparty system, and support for planned economy. So far, these contradictions are not properly addressed by Kyiv, which provides grounds for a permanent radical shift between different administrations.

Post-Soviet transit is not finished. Revolutionary and restorationist processes remain strong in all societies of the region. Our journal will continue publishing research analyzing these ongoing developments.
Bibliography


PUTIN'S RUSSIA AS A NEOPATRIMONIAL REGIME

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Abstract. Classification of the current Russian regime is an overdeveloped although underperforming area of scholarly debate. The Weberian concept of neopatrimonialism, which is usually employed in the context of Africa and Latin America, offers a promising explanation of the persisting features of Russian decision-making; the latter proves to be independent of its institutional framework, thus rendering the entire democratic-authoritarian dichotomy superficial. Although scholars have employed neopatrimonialism (e.g. Gel’man 2015, Fisun 2012, Robinson 2011) for various research purposes, its specific applicability to Putin’s Russia has never been examined in a dedicated work. This case study examines the neopatrimonialism approach and its heuristic prospects (1) by presenting the concept of neopatrimonialism and discerning its key variables of patron-client hierarchy, rent extraction, and conditional property, and (2) by identifying each of these variables with major traits of Russia’s contemporary sociopolitical structure, including the “power vertical,” Russian Railways’ role in the extractive economy, and conditional private property. This study concludes by discussing pro et contra arguments regarding the place and utility of neopatrimonial optics in the academic debate about Russia.
Keywords: neopatrimonialism, conditional property, rent extraction, Weber, Russia, Putin.
**Introduction**

“Since any order is better than any disorder, any order is established” – this Hobbesian observation by Adam Przeworski captures the current state of certainty about the classification of Russia’s current regime (1991, p. 86). The mere existence of the Russian Leviathan is the only fact beyond doubt, its genus and species being a matter of controversy. Is it an electoral authoritarian regime, a hybrid regime, a managed or defective democracy, an autocracy, a petrostate, or, perhaps, a fascist state, as asserted by Alexander Motyl (2016)? The answer would not only interest scholars, but it also would elucidate the country’s prospects and the probability of regime change (Fisun, 2012, p. 91).

Initially, the majority of researchers perceived the nascent Russian Federation and the other post-Soviet states as a part of Samuel Huntington’s third wave of democratization (1991), and they studied these states within the framework of modernization theory and transitology. However, the euphoria of Fukuyama’s “End of History” (1989) as applied to Russia did not last for long, as the country’s political development fostered skepticism concerning the teleological certainty of its eventual democratic transition. The “theoretical dead-end” of the traditional dichotomy of democracy and authoritarianism has resulted in a plethora of regime definitions “with adjectives.” The disappointment in the post-Soviet transition has also encouraged the application of concepts originally employed in the study of Third World countries—e.g., neopatrimonialism, which emerged in the 1970s under similar methodological circumstances
in African and Latin American Studies (Fisun, 2012, pp. 87–89). Samuel Eisenstadt, one of the authors of the theory of neopatrimonialism, directly connected the theory’s development to the “critical attitude [taken toward] some of the assumptions of the first studies of modernization and political development” (1973, p. 8).

The motivating questions of this paper are the following: 1) Is the theoretical framework of neopatrimonialism applicable to Russia under Putin? 2) If yes, how can it be instrumental in enhancing our understanding of this regime? To answer the first question, I will present the concept of neopatrimonialism and discern its key independent variables: hierarchy of patron-client bonds, rent extraction, and conditional property; I will then relate each variable to a key trait of the Russia’s contemporary sociopolitical structure, providing background details and descriptions of the considered phenomena. The second question will be addressed by discussing pro et contra arguments regarding the place and utility of neopatrimonial optics in the academic debate regarding classification of Putin’s regime.

1. Concept of Neopatrimonialism

1.1. Theoretical foundations

The concept of “patrimonialism” was coined by Max Weber in his unfinished magnum opus Economy and Society, where he distinguished patrimonialism from both feudal and legal-rational, bureaucratic ideal types of government. Weber describes patrimonial domination as viewing
“all governing powers and the corresponding economic rights as privately appropriated economic advantages.” It is historically rooted in the household administration of princes, who regarded the realm as a *patrimonium* (“paternal estate” in Latin) and granted to clients economic and social privileges, fiefs, tax-farming licenses, etc. (Weber, 1978, p. 236).

The essential trait of patrimonialism is, therefore, the lack of distinction between the public and private spheres of society, both being owned by the ruler as a source of personal wealth (ibid., pp. 226–241).

Guenther Roth applied Weber’s concept of patrimonialism to modern states in 1968. In Weber’s ideal types of rule Roth discerns two distinct components: 1) a foundation of legitimacy and 2) a mode of administration. Roth goes on to argue that, although the traditional legitimacy of Weber’s patrimonialism is mostly absent in the modern world, its “actual operating modes and administrative arrangements” do persist, thereby justifying the application of this framework to modern political systems (Roth 1968, p. 195).

Roth calls these modern forms of patrimonialism “personal rulership,” although they require no particular concern for the ruler’s personality and are based primarily on material stimuli. Elements of modern patrimonialism are by no means absent from Western societies, where they take the form of factions or political machines that grow together with government powers. However, the proportion of personal rulership in underdeveloped countries is dramatically higher, while legal-rational bureaucracy is virtually absent, rendering these societies private...
instruments of the powerful—"properly speaking, not states at all" (ibid., pp. 204–206).

In the absence of the economic integration present in industrialized Western countries, patrimonialism plays a major integrative role in underdeveloped countries. The political center or core in patrimonial systems revolves around the patron’s informal distribution of the state’s economic resources and privileges to the lower levels of the clientelist bureaucracy, in exchange for loyalty and support (Theobald, 1982, p. 550).

1.2. The Neopatrimonial System

Samuel Eisenstadt took Roth’s approach further by coining the term “neopatrimonialism.” Eisenstadt uses the term to describe developing countries with a political system wherein modern nation-state structures are interwoven with a patrimonial mode of administration (1973, p. 12). He argues that, being founded on elements of traditional authority, neopatrimonialism is usually perceived as being rooted in the past, as a rudiment so deeply embedded in the social and political fabric of a polity that the legal-rational type of rule fails to eliminate it completely. Hence, neopatrimonialism can become a form of traditionalist reaction to modernization’s failures (Gel’man, 2015, p. 458).

The co-existence of patrimonial and legal-rational bureaucratic types of domination is the distinctive feature of neopatrimonialism. In contrast to Weberian patrimonialism, neopatrimonialism retains at least a formal distinction between the private and the public realm in the form of a legal-rational bureaucratic framework of a “modern” state. This separation, however, is only observed if the personal interests of ruling groups are not
involved in the bureaucratic framework. Otherwise, two contradicting “systems of logic” would be present simultaneously: the excessive personal relations of patrimonialism would penetrate the bureaucratic legality and twist its “logic, functions, and output,” albeit without suppressing it entirely. In this case, “informal politics invades formal institutions” (Erdmann, Engel, 2007, p. 104).

The informal, neopatrimonial “core” plays the role of a *de facto* constitution for both politics and the economy, as it is encircled by the shell of formal institutions such as official constitutions, legal codes, and electoral systems. However, this shell acts not as mere camouflage for neopatrimonialism, but as a mechanism of power-sharing among ruling groups that increases regime stability by maintaining the balance of power among the members of winning coalitions (Gel’man, 2015, p. 458).

1.3. The Key Variables

The following “core” characteristics can serve as independent variables for classifying a given regime as neopatrimonial. These characteristics correspond to three contextual “variable sets” of neopatrimonialism delineated by Robin Theobald: characteristics of society’s political and economic factors, as well as the specificity of its bureaucracy. In his view, considering these aspects facilitates an understanding of why such regimes exist and helps to “differentiate between bureaucratic structures in societies at different stages of socio-economic development” (Theobald, 1982, pp. 558–559). I will employ the concept of extractive institutions by Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson as an additional reference point for my argument below. The “core” characteristics are as follows:
1) **Personal rule through a hierarchy of informal patron-client relationships.** Decision-making is concentrated in one center of political power and exercised through personal ties. The rational-legal system is structured as a by-product of the patron-client resource distribution and matters only as much as it is instrumental – directly or indirectly – for securing and maximizing rent extraction\(^2\) (Gel’m'an, 2015, p. 457). Acemoglu and Robinson define such political arrangements as extractive and point out their strong synergy with extractive economic institutions, which, in fact, “inherently depend on such political institutions for their survival” (2012, p. 92).

2) **Rent extraction.** Personal enrichment is the major, rational goal of the political class at all levels of government. The ruling groups consider the public sphere their private domain, using their formal position for the appropriation of public wealth. Thus, the functioning of formal bureaucratic institutions is aimed at the preservation and consolidation of ruling groups’ power, in order to maximize the amount of rent and ensure the continuity of its extraction (Erdmann and Engel, 2007, pp. 109-110). Within the framework of Acemoglu and Robinson, this trait of neopatrimonialism would be described as extractive economic institutions “designed to extract incomes and wealth from one subset of society to benefit a different subset” (2012, p. 86).

\(^2\) It is important to emphasize that the lack of an institutional façade can contradict a polity’s classification as neopatrimonial. This aspect raises a substantial methodological question: how does neopatrimonial domination correlate with the other political and economic classifications? It will be addressed further in this paper.
3) **Conditional property.** The autonomy of political and economic actors in a neopatrimonial polity is conditional and can be reduced or abolished by an informal decision, which would be *post factum* formally legalized by the façade institutions (Gel’man, 2015, p. 458). Hence, ruling groups appropriate from not only public but also private spheres of society. Property rights are dependent on the political position and influence of the holder and exist as long as she possesses sufficient personal clout within the informal patron-client network to preserve it. The higher the level of engagement in economic activity, the more the established patronal network is necessary to stay afloat in such extractive institutions, “under which the rule of law and property rights are absent for large majorities of the population” (Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson, 2005, p. 397).

2. **The Case of Putin’s Russia**

These key variables of neopatrimonialism can be observed in Putin’s Russia as a particular constellation of formal institutional arrangements and informal practices of the political class, both of which are rooted in the country’s history and in recent developments of post-Soviet power consolidation.

2.1. **The Power Vertical**

Henry Hale describes the informal hierarchy of Putin’s Russia as a “single power pyramid.” Informal patronal pyramids, or political machines, are complex networks of patron-client relations called “administrative
resource.” They exist at all levels of society and operate via “personal incentives and private benefits made to specific individuals (jobs, contingent opportunities to gain private income, bribes, help with local problems, assistance to relatives, etc.) as well as explicit or implicit threats made to these same individuals” (Hale, 2010, p. 34). President Yeltsin’s “competing-pyramid” system in the 1990s witnessed the rivalry of many regional and corporate patronage pyramids of semi-autonomous regional leaders and so-called “oligarchs,” ushered to power respectively by swift decentralization and privatization.

Gaining control over these political and economic factors that emerged from these two major post-Soviet reforms was the primary task for Vladimir Putin, as he rose to power in the capacity of Yeltsin’s successor in 2000. By the end of his first two terms as president, Putin had transformed the informal patronal power structure into a “single-pyramid” or “power vertical” system wherein the “president has effectively combined the most important lower-level patronal networks into one large nationwide political machine” (ibid., p. 35). Putin controls the informal power vertical by distributing patronage to a network of various rent-seeking clients who all represent their own power pyramids, such as those of “inner circle” cronies, the military and secret services, industrial magnates, or loyal regional elites (Fisun, 2012, p. 92).

The power vertical is therefore divided into smaller, informal patron-client pyramids competing for access to rents, each involved in formal and informal subordination and a web of informal exchanges. The formal presence of competitive elections means that vote delivery also constitutes
a major resource in these exchanges. These power sub-verticals can be observed even within law enforcement structures, educational institutions, private businesses and NGOs (Gel’man 2016, p. 460). However, subordination and control are not the only functions of the neopatrimonial power vertical, as it also distributes selective incentives for increased access to rents that are not available for less loyal actors. Corruption under Putin is therefore not a side effect, but a vital part of Russian neopatrimonial governance, which can use both sticks and carrots to encourage clients to compete to prove their loyalty is highest of all. The most prominent example of such competition in the business realm is the rivalry between the oil and gas giants Gazprom and Rosneft. Russian law enforcement also experiences fierce competition for rent-extracting privileges, e.g., between the Office of the Prosecutor General and its formally subordinate agency, the Investigative Committee (ibid., pp. 461–462).

Russian formal institutions are historically consistent with informal neopatrimonial rule. The late Communist regime in Russia demonstrated decay into neopatrimonialism, wherein personalism and clientelism both subverted and helped to maintain the formal bureaucratic party-state system. Thus, socio-political developments in Russia in the 1990s were shaped by Soviet neopatrimonial legacies, as well as by economic pressure and the need to build a new democratic institutional façade to secure legitimacy and fulfill essential state functions necessary for rent extraction under new circumstances (Robinson 2011, p. 441). Yeltsin’s 1993 constitution established a super-presidential system with a technocratic
government that had virtually no political role play, as that role fully belonged to the president. This formal organization is also a direct successor of the late Soviet Union and its power distribution between the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Council of Ministers. It can even be said to echo the administrative scheme of the Russian Empire’s entirely subordinate Committee of Ministers, which corresponds to the dynamics of informal neopatrimonialism, in which bureaucracy merely administers the state as the ruler’s *patrimonium* (Gel’man and Starodubtsev, 2014, pp. 10–11).

To reiterate, the institutional and legal system of Russia as a modern state – its democratic constitution and division of powers, multiparty parliamentary system, private and public law – can be described as a mere shell, subordinated to the machinery of informal patron-client bonds. For political and economic actors, these neopatrimonial bonds determine their access to various resources based on personal exchanges of loyalty and capital, not on formal laws and contracts (Fisun 2012, p. 92).

### 2.2. Rent Extraction

Power maximization in politics and rent maximization in the economy constitute a rational goal for ruling groups. Putin and his close associates have achieved this goal by establishing a single-peak hierarchy that has maintained the stability of extractive political and economic institutions and solidified their dominant position in the existing configuration of both political and economic actors (Gel’man, 2015, p. 459).

The inner circle of the Russian president – consisting of his school friends, judo sparring partners, colleagues from the early 1990s, and
personal physicians – was instrumental in creating a network of personally loyal clients to manage key economic assets that previously belonged to independent power pyramids, in private and public sector alike. All the president's men (or, to be more precise, their personal affiliation with Putin and swift rise to wealth and power in the 2000s) came under international scrutiny after being targeted by American and EU sanctions, after the Russian annexation of Crimea and military incursion in other Ukrainian regions (Gardner, 2014). The largest single asset of Putin’s cronies is his 1990s country cottage co-operative *Ozero*, explicitly mentioned by the U.S. Treasury Department in its sanctions announcement. One of its members, Vladimir Yakunin, represents an exemplary case of neopatrimonial rent extraction, having transformed the federal Ministry of Railways into a virtual private asset (Heritage, 2014).

Soon after Putin’s accession to the Kremlin, Yakunin became the deputy minister of transportation and took over the ministry two years later. In 2003, a presidential decree transformed the Ministry of Railways into the state-owned monopoly Russian Railways (RZD), which was soon to become a joint-stock company under Yakunin’s control. Its subsidiary companies could not take the losses from the extremely high tariffs RZD dictated and requested state intervention. In 2011, the federal government transferred coverage of transport operators’ losses to regional authorities, who, in turn, did not have sufficient funds and requested them from the federal budget. This scheme effectively transferred taxpayers’ money into Yakunin’s (primarily offshore) accounts. However, the amount of rent available to Yakunin, according to his position in the power pyramid, could
still be increased. In 2015, upon the request of the RZD, the federal government drastically increased rail infrastructure fees, thus aggravating the public financial burden from commuter train subsidies and causing a complete shutdown of train in some regions. After direct intervention by the president, the trains were reintroduced, but taxpayers still had to pay the bills presented by RZD. Despite criticism of Yakunin in the media and calls for his removal as CEO, the personal patronage of Putin has made Russian railroads Yakunin’s private holding, with all its functions subordinate to rent extraction. In sum, a former federal ministry and the state-owned monopoly of Russian Railroads (the largest employer in the country) were appropriated by a presidential crony, who turned it into a tool for rent maximization and left the arbitrary costs to public expense (Gel’man, 2015, pp. 456–458).

Yakunin’s eventual forced retirement after the aforementioned commuter train scandal exposes another important issue of neopatrimonial rent extraction – its inherent limits. Such a weakening of state capacity by personal exploitation of extractive institutions – which, in this case, left millions of Russians without any means of transportation – cannot go so far as to entirely destroy the legal-rational shell of the modern state and drift into full patrimonialism. The rational interests of elites in rent extraction secures the existence of the modern state’s basic functionality, which is critical for socio-political stability. The exact minimum is contingent and depends on multiple social and economic factors, which prevent popular unrest. In the case of modern Russia, these factors are mainly state security and the Soviet legacy of social security in the form of
state pensions and some level of free healthcare and education (Robinson 2014, p. 16). While securing the stability of a neopatrimonial polity, the limit of rent extraction also exposes the inherent tension between the traditional appropriation of the public sphere as personal wealth and its legal-rational framework of modern state structure (Robinson 2011, p. 437).

2.3. Conditional Property

One of the most prominent Western scholars of Russian history, Richard Pipes, employs the Weberian concept of patrimonialism to explain the entire history of Russia. He sees its primary cause in the lack of institutionalized property rights and, in the broader sense, in the violation of unconditional human rights by the arbitrary power of the state: “A despot violates his subjects’ property rights; a patrimonial ruler does not even acknowledge their existence.” This patrimonial legacy persisted in the course of modernization attempts by Peter I and the Bolsheviks, for example, because these attempts were undertaken by the same arbitrary methods. Having introduced the façade of the Western political structures while not adhering to the very concept of property rights, these reforms thus entrenched the patrimonial core, laying the foundation for Russia’s undemocratic and ineffective development trajectory (Pipes, 1974, pp. 22–23).

The Russian regime under Putin is an example of an economy based on conditional property instead of private property, meaning that one’s right to the control and use of an asset is dependent on one’s political influence. Façade institutions such as the formally independent judiciary branch function as an instrument of property requisition and redistribution
among members of the power vertical. Informal decisions to cancel one’s property right are formally framed as a court ruling (Darden, 2010, p. 70). Apart from multiple negative effects on the economy, the persistence of conditional property raises the stakes for actors who are considering participating in elections or any other form of political activity. The fate of one’s economic assets is informally determined by ruling groups, which selectively use formal legal procedures to reward loyal actors and punish disloyal ones (ibid., p. 72).

The exemplary case of arbitrary property redistribution is the “Yukos affair.” In 2003, opposition figure, owner of the Yukos oil empire, and the richest man in Russia, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, was put in jail, while his business was acquired by the state-owned oil company Rosneft – to the personal benefit of its CEO, Igor Sechin, who is another member of Putin’s inner circle. Khodorkovsky was twice charged and found guilty of corruption and money laundering and was sentenced to 11 years in prison. He has directly accused Sechin of plotting his arrest and plundering his oil company: "The second as well as the first case were organized by Igor Sechin. He orchestrated the first case against me out of greed and the second out of cowardice" (Franchetti, 2008). In fact, the Yukos affair was a part of a larger Kremlin strategy to cow or confiscate businesses that could potentially be active in politics. In 2000, soon after taking office, Putin met with the leading business owners to warn them that they can count on retaining control of their assets as long as they comply with his wishes in politics. Khodorkovsky broke this “pact” by financing the opposition, thereby precipitating his arrest (Hale, 2010, p. 37).
In a state with conditional property, any uncertainty in political succession or regime change becomes hazardous. For neopatrimonial ruling groups, the costs of dissent, losing an election, or any other political participation are not tolerable, as failure would most likely mean losing all assets and freedom. Elite support for authoritarian rule can *inter alia* be perceived as a natural desire for secure property. This security is, however, unattainable in the long run, since any power vertical will ultimately come to a crisis of succession (Darden, 2010, p. 76).

Another effect of the neopatrimonial fusion of economic and political power and the resulting conditional property regime is that Russian business activity abroad necessarily produces a certain degree of involvement in the domestic politics of foreign countries. Since being in control of any significant economic assets implies political influence within the informal patron-client framework, the presence of Russian companies means that they can use their patron’s government connections to promote their business interests using state power, including military force, as it happens in many post-Soviet countries (ibid., p. 78). Ukraine, with its strategically important gas pipeline and production of crucial aerospace and defense industry parts, represents the most striking example. In 2013, just before the Russian annexation of Crimea, 24% of Ukrainian exports went to Russia (Dunnett, 2015). Its banking, energy, and metallurgy sectors are still heavily dominated by the major Russian companies controlled by influential members of the Russian power vertical, despite three years of a *de-facto* state of war between the two countries (Yakimenko, 2016).
3. Pro et Contra Discussion

The primary argument for studying Putin’s Russia as a neopatrimonial state is the heuristic potential. While the usual classifications of Putin’s Russia as the hybrid regime of Diamond (2002) or the competitive authoritarianism of Levitsky and Way (2002) describe a polity primarily in terms of electoral politics, levels of democracy, or formal institutions, neopatrimonialism examines a deeper level of societal relations (Robinson, 2014, pp. 6–7).

The focus on Weberian legal-rational institutionalization and the role of informal patronal relations offers an explanation as to why regimes with different political structures perform similarly on the level of decision-making and governance, and thereby render the democratic-authoritarian dichotomy a relatively superficial framework of political analysis. Any formal constitutional arrangement could be a mere “by-product of neopatrimonialism in the political arena” (Gel’man, 2015, p. 459).

For instance, notwithstanding a significant increase of centralization and a departure from democratic standards during Putin’s rule, the data shows no significant change in the governance-related variables from 1996 to 2015 (Figure 1). The country’s seemingly radical departure from the 1990s affected only the formal political façade; there was no impact at the level of actual institutionalization, since the prevalence of informal patronal relations has persisted. Russia remains within the neopatrimonial space of these variables as defined by Neil Robinson (2011, p. 444).
Figure 1: Governance in Russia (selected World Bank Governance Indicators)

Neopatrimonial optics enable us to explain such data by covering both the formal political regime and its underlying model of governance; the data cannot be reduced to either of these elements alone (Gel’man, 2015, p. 458).

On the other hand, neopatrimonialism is widely criticized as a catch-all concept attempting to explain too much and thus failing to explain anything at all. The relationship between the elements of patrimonial rule and legal-rational bureaucratic rule is never clearly defined, thus allowing virtually any regime to qualify as neopatrimonial, with far-reaching conclusions. Being, in fact, a hybrid of two Weberian ideal types of domination, neopatrimonialism shares all the usual criticisms of hybridism, including inherent vagueness and serving as a deus ex machina to support any claim or even contradictor claims (Erdmann and Engel, 2007, pp. 96, 114).
As an example, we shall employ the question mentioned at the beginning of this paper: the prospects of the current Russian regime. Scholars offer diametrically opposed assessments of this issue within the same neopatrimonial framework. Vladimir Gel’man contends that the regime's established neopatrimonial system is inherently stable, since its rational logic dictates that elites ensure “the preservation of a stable economic and social order, in which the ruling group runs unchallenged and maintains the relative well-being of the population at large” (2016, p. 461). The low level of institutionalization suggests that even an abrupt change of leadership and liberal reforms of the formal institutional shell would not be able to affect the informal patron-client relations at the core of the Russian political system. Any intentions of democratization would be eventually “emasculated and perverted by rent-seekers, who are interested in the privatization of gains from policy reforms and in the socialization of their losses” (ibid., p. 463). On the other hand, Oleksandr Fisun argues that the system is prone to intra-elite conflicts which may eventually lead to a “color revolution” similar to those in Ukraine and Georgia, understood as a “response by some influential elites to the enhanced enforcement and coercive functions of the neopatrimonial state.” In the situation of economic recession and diminishing supply of rents, the competition of patron-client interest groups can subvert the stability of the established power vertical (Fisun, 2012, pp. 94–95). This criticism calls for a greater level of operationalization and delimitation of neopatrimonialism against cognate but weaker concepts like clientelism or patronage, but it does not refute the interpretative value of neopatrimonialism as such.
Finally, the neopatrimonial interpretation of the Russian political system provides a promising framework for explaining features such as persisting authoritarian tendencies by putting it not only in the post-Soviet and Eastern European context, but comparing it to a variety of regimes in Africa and Latin America, as well. As these regions have been studied through the neopatrimonial lens since the 1970s, a broad perspective offers more data for comparative analysis. Discerning neopatrimonial patterns in the political systems of countries with a high degree of dissimilarity also provides a wide range of opportunities for applying the Most Different Systems Design.

4. Conclusion

The concept of neopatrimonialism is derived from the works of Weber and used in the analysis of modern political domination. It interweaves patrimonial administrative practices with the legitimacy and formal institutional facade of the modernized bureaucratic state.

Vladimir Putin’s governance of Russia serves as an example of neopatrimonial rule and contains all of its key traits. His personal rule through informal patron-client hierarchy takes the form of a consolidated power vertical, with different interest groups competing for access to public and private assets as sources of privately appropriated rent. The maximization and perpetuation of this rent is the driving force for decision-making at all levels of the Russian ruling class, resulting in a rational limitation of appropriation to ensure maintenance of essential public services and military capabilities. The destructive economic effects of
extractive, neopatrimonial institutions and conditional private property are aggravated by a vicious circle of political effects – i.e., elites’ reluctance to take any political actions. The Russian neopatrimonial system presents the ruling groups with a “throffer,” the offer part being increased access to rent extraction in the case of compliance, and the threat being the loss of assets and possible risks for life and freedom.

Although the neopatrimonial approach may need some methodological refinement, it proves useful in identifying the administrative patterns behind the formal political structure of the modern Russian regime. It offers a glimpse into a deeper, informal level of governance, which is not covered by analysis within the traditional democracy-authoritarianism dichotomy or offered by concepts like hybrid regime and competitive authoritarianism. Ultimately, the neopatrimonial perspective on Russia’s current regime opens a broad horizon for comparative research.

That said, it is important to appreciate that no conceptual framework can grasp the social reality in its entirety. Some approaches, like neopatrimonialism, are more instrumental in organizing the comparative analysis and enhancing understanding, some are less. Since a tendency towards conceptual unanimity or even lasting consensus would be counterproductive, definitional pluralism of multiple competing frameworks that amplify each other is not just inevitable, but desirable.

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3 A term coined by political philosopher Hillel Steiner. It is a portmanteau word, which blends “threat” and “offer”.
Bibliography


RESTORATIONIST AND REVOLUTIONARY IMPERIALISM IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE OF CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA:
SHIFT OF THE POST-SOVIETIDEOLOGICAL SPECTRUM TO THE RIGHT
AND KREMLIN’S ANTI-WESTERN TURN

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Abstract. Most of the meso-level explanations of Putin’s authoritarianism, anti-westernism and irredentism are of political economic nature. This article is based on an alternative interpretation that analyzes Russian ideological spectrum. This method involves biographical micro-level research of the key persons, on one side, and historiosophic meta-politology dedicated to the “Russia’s Fate”, on the other. Radicalization of Putin’s regime can be explained not only through economic interests of the ruling elites, Putin’s and his allies’ biographies, or some deep patterns of Russian history. The evident shift of ideological spectrum to the right under Putin rule took place in the times of the rise of revolutionary imperialism. This ideology was shred by those who joined Zhirinovsky’s and Dugin’s parties. Although Putin’s regime remains reactionary, contemporary official ideology includes elements of revolutionary imperialism, and their barers are invited to main TV channels, conferences etc. Due to this, these ideas change the structure of the semi-open public discourse and influence Russia’s foreign policy.
Key words: Russia, imperialism, fascism, ideology, political specter.

Entire text of the article is accessible in Russian.
IMAGE AND IMITATION

THE VISUAL RHETORIC OF PRO-RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA

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Abstract. This article explores the counter-narratives launched against Ukrainian popular and nationalist causes in 2013 and 2014. It engages with semiotic and visual anthropological theory to articulate how these counter narratives are designed and how they are meant to work. Many pro-Russian acts of propaganda and provocations made use of the specific iconography with which Maidan was branded and its participants were branded in public imagination. This tactic amounted to blatant mimicry, and it appeared in countless forms from Anti-Maidan ‘stickering’ campaigns in Kyiv’s Mariinsky Park to Russian soldiers posing as local ‘self defense brigades’ in Crimea. While this visual imitation may appear simple and straightforward, I argue that highly sophisticated semiotic techniques were used to disrupt the interpretation of photographic images. This technique exploits the fluidity of what Roland Barthes calls ‘the third meaning’ of images for the purpose of granting the appearance of legitimacy to politically motivated counter narratives. Though

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these counter narratives cannot be fully evidenced (because they are not true), they accomplish their goals by generating faith in a false objectivity of the image. They dislodge the viewer’s faith in the myth of photographic truth, even while encouraging the viewer to believe in that truth.

Keywords: media, propaganda, images, semiotics, Maidan, Crimea, Donbas.
In a recent op-ed published in *The Guardian*, Peter Pomerantsev, a British television producer who worked for the Russian channel TNT from 2006-2010, recalled his discovery of a very unusual instruction book. He described the Russian-language manual, entitled *Information-Psychological War Operation: a Short Encyclopedia and Reference Guide*, as “a kind of user’s manual for junior information warriors” (Pomerantsev, 2015). The purpose of information warfare, according to this manual, was not to generate an alternative explanation of events but rather to “influence social relations” and “[act] like an invisible radiation” on its audiences. “The population itself,” the manual reads, “doesn’t even feel it is being acted upon” (Veprintsev et al., 2011, cited in Pomerantsev, 2015). Four techniques for producing this form of “invisible radiation” are outlined in the manual: military operational deception (*maskirovka*); programmatical-mathematical influence (which I take to mean the manipulation of election totals, ministerial budget sheets, and other statistical instruments); imitation; and disinformation. Pomerantsev was surprised by the book’s imperatives. They violated his own understanding of what constitutes “information war”; he had originally pictured two political powers duking it out over different versions of the truth. Instead, the techniques described were ostensibly designed to produce a shifting and “spongy” sense of reality—one he recognized as a rather commonplace struggle for so many media professionals in post-Maidan Ukraine.

Though these tactics are certainly not unique to the Russian context, disinformation campaigns of Russian origin have, of late, captured public
imagination in a powerful way. Disinformation, very generally defined, is false information spread with the intent to deceive. In popular imagination today, disinformation may take the form of activities ranging from a false flag operation to the purposeful misinterpretation of data to the defense of unsubstantiated claims and propaganda. Within the sphere of Russia’s alleged activities, for example, new connections have been drawn between Edward Snowden (who is wanted in the United States for treason), the online Wikileaks project, and Kremlin sponsored political agendas (Beauchamp, 2017; Kelley, 2014; Wilentz, 2014). The Russian news channel RT (a stylized shortening of the original name, *Russia Today*) has been openly criticized by media analysts as a propaganda arm of the Kremlin, an organ designed to disseminate disinformation amongst Western and English speaking audiences to promote specific ideological views (Ioffe, 2010; The Economist, 2017). Even now, at the time of writing, the US government is preparing to launch a formal investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential campaign via the strategic hacking of and selective release of information from the Democratic political party, activities allegedly designed to sour public opinion of then-presidential candidate Hilary Clinton (Kelly, 2017). As has been noted by scholars of Eastern Europe too numerous to cite, these tactics are not new. What is new, in the current moment, is the influence these tactics are meeting out in North American and Western European politics as well as growth in public awareness of disinformation efforts in the English-speaking world.

The purpose of these disinformation campaigns, according to critics, is the consolidation of political power through the unsettling of truth,
rather than through the promotion of a coherent set of alternative facts or selected truths. For example, Ben Nimmo, writing for the *Foreign Policy*, described Russian media coverage of the MH17 crash in Eastern Ukraine\(^5\) as “a disinformation operation of unprecedented scope and scale,” which engaged government offices, news channels like RT, and armies of internet trolls to articulate and provide something akin to evidence for numerous, contradictory explanations for the crash—none of which implicated the Russian Federation (Nimmo, 2016). Historian Timothy Snyder has observed, “Russian propaganda provides both sides of the story. [American audiences] assume that the truth is in between. But no truth lies between propositions that are individually false and mutually contradictory” (Snyder, 2014).

Laying the ideological groundwork for the current “fake news” crisis in the United States, the impact of this dizzying array of misinformation emerging from Russian political and media spheres should not be underestimated.

The purpose of this article, is to turn our attention to the edges rough edges of XX campaigns in Eastern Europe, focusing especially less well-known technique of deception and informational warfare—one of the key tools outlined in the Pomerantsev’s found manual—currently emerging from within the Russian sphere of influence: imitation. By this, I mean the deliberate attempt to make one thing appear as though it is really another by copying its features. Methods of imitation typically generate less public

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\(^5\) Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 (or MH17) was a commercial airliner on its way from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur that crashed into land occupied by separatists in the Donbas region on July 17, 2014. All 283 passengers on board were killed. By September, evidence had emerged that the plane was struck down by a Buk missile, an advanced anti-aircraft system, which had been brought into the separatist zone from Russia and was under the control of Russian and Russian-backed fighters. Russia’s government has formally denied any culpability for the crash. ("MH17 Ukraine plane crash," 2016)
scandal than disinformation campaigns, as it is a tool with a much lower profile and requires far fewer resources. The more well-known techniques, such as disseminating alternative narratives through state-controlled television news operations, are not cheap, and though comment may be free, hiring a small army of individuals to post stylistically manipulated commentary on Twitter and other social media sites requires real, actual cash. Imitation, on the other hand, can be achieved by a few select operatives working in a concerted fashion at a strategic time and place.

Take, for example, the 1999 bombings of apartment complexes in several of Russia’s major urban centers. On August 31, 1999, an explosion at a popular shopping mall in Moscow city center left one person dead and injured many more. This began a chain of explosions that included bombings at no less than three apartment buildings, two in Moscow and one in Buynaksk, and in the city of Volgodonsk a truck explosion so powerful that more than one thousand people were injured—all within the next two weeks. Hundreds of civilians were killed. That these acts were carried out by Chechens, a Muslim minority that had been engaged in a military conflict with Russia over territories in the south, seemed all but self-evident (Gessen, 2012). Vladimir Putin, who had been just elected Prime Minister in August of that year, was quick to cement the official narrative and blame Chechen terrorists for these events, quickly constructing a justification for the Second Chechen War, an escalated military engagement, which soon sent his once-abysmal approval ratings through the roof. These events, which kicked off Putin’s consolidation of political power in the Russian Federation, appeared quite clearly, even as
they took place, to have been orchestrated not by Chechen rebels but by members of Russia’s own security service, the FSB. In a particularly egregious slip up that revealed the farcical origins of these explosions, one Russian parliamentarian mistakenly announced one of the apartment bombings (a.k.a “terror attacks”) several days before that bomb actually went off (Snyder, 2017).

The apartment bombings served as proof of concept that relatively small-scale operations of mimicry and imitation can have a significant effect on the political trajectory of a nation or on geopolitical arrangements more broadly (in this example, FSB agents were overtly imitating alleged terrorist tactics for the sake of making the public believe that these bombings were, in fact, terrorist acts). Such informational warfare through imitation rarely emerges in places as far-flung as Western Europe or North America, I presume, for want of actual boots on the ground to carry out such activities. Nevertheless, imitation remains a go-to method for information warfare in the region geographically proximal to Moscow—especially in those countries situated squarely within the Russian Federation’s sphere of influence.

Informational warfare through imitation also diverges from current disinformation campaigns in that it does not project specific counter narratives—alternative explanations of events designed with the intent of replacing the common narrative with a new one carefully crafted for political ends. By its very nature, imitation relies on the adoption of clear narrative roles and subjectivities in order to be legible to the target audience. Yet, rather than contradicting those narratives, imitation seeks to
enhance them, to exaggerate their power over popular imagination for the political control that power can afford. If the public can’t make sense of what they are seeing, even if what they are seeing is a falsehood, then the attempt at imitation will be for naught. For example, if the apartment bombings were not crafted to appear like terrorist attacks, and if the government were not able to caption these events as terrorist attacks in the media (if, instead, disinformation campaigns sought to promote multiple contradictory narratives all at once), the public would have had no idea what to make of these explosions. By making them appear to be terrorist attacks, these imitative efforts were able to harness public dismay and fear of terrorist activity, to amplify those fears and direct that energy towards achieving the political goals of the new Putin regime.

In this article, I train my analysis on acts of imitation that were carried out during the Maidan Revolution in Kyiv, Ukraine, between November 2013 and February 2014 and from the crises in Crimea and the Donbas region, which ramped up in the months that followed. I focus, in particular, on tropes of visual imagery that emerged from the protests and surreptitious attempts to reproduce those tropes for purposes of informational warfare. Many counter protests and provocations made use of the specific iconography with which Maidan was branded. This tactic, which appeared in countless forms from Anti-Maidan fake grassroots movement in Kyiv’s Mariinsky Park to Russian soldiers posing as local “self defense brigades” in Crimea, amounted to little more than blatant, politically motivated mimicry.
While such examples of imitation may appear to be facile or transparent, I argue here that sophisticated semiotic techniques were (and still are) being used to disrupt the public’s interpretation of particular images for the benefit of those deploying counter narratives, even while encouraging the viewer to believe in a specific truth with which they are presented. With the help of foundational theories of semiotics and cognition put forward by theorists such as Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles S. Pierce, and Roland Barthes, my aim is to put into words the strategies employed by the authors of counter-narratives in the ongoing political and military conflicts in Ukraine—to pull back a veil that is thick only insofar as the average media consumer lacks a standardized vocabulary for talking about these phenomena. This exercise will not only be profitable for responding to these counter narratives but also for gaining a deeper understanding of the culture and ideology out of which they are formed. For, as much as polyvalent disinformation campaigns may have captured the attention of media critics and post-Soviet scholars alike, disinformation does not monopolize propaganda strategies in Eastern Europe; other approaches also merit our attention.

**A Brief Anatomy of The Image**

The first step in understanding how imitation functions as a tool of information warfare is examining how images and texts convey meaning differently. Anthropologist and professional photo-journalist Danny Hoffman articulated this difference well in his 2012 photo essay entitled *Corpus: Mining the Border*, which was published online by the journal
In this project, Hoffman penned a short essay about the socio-political and military contexts that cause young men to find themselves engaged in the grueling labor of alluvial diamond minds on the Sierra Leonean border. He paired segments of this essay with hypnotic, devastating photographs of young, strong, male bodies mid-course in acts of strenuous manual labor. These images present what he calls “an ethnographic portrait of the shape and texture of work” (Hoffman, 2012).

In his accompanying essay, Hoffman argues that text and image are both necessary to successfully present his argument, based on extensive ethnographic work in Sierra Leone, that military conflict and manual labor bear on these men’s bodies in indistinguishable ways. He writes:

There is an excessiveness to the images that terms like work and labor, when rendered as text on the page, simply cannot register. The work, like the miners who do it, has a militant masculinity about it. Text can chart the larger political economy in which the mines and miners are situated (something the images alone cannot adequately do). But only the momentary alienation sparked by the visual image of this mode of work conveys the materiality of West African diamond mining as labor...I have argued elsewhere for understanding the labors of these young men on the battlefield and on the mines as qualitatively identical, but bound by terms like ‘war’ and ‘work,’ the text alone invariably re-inscribes a qualitative difference between the two. The image collapses that
distinction and allows it to register as an affront. (Hoffman, 2012).

What Hoffman points to, and what is key for the analysis presented here, is that both text and image convey meaning; both can be used in argument either as evidence or as a tool of persuasion; both are culturally inflected and open to interpretation by the viewer. However, text and image are incapable of performing the same kind of symbolic work. It is a very different act to explain with words the similarities between war and work than it is to capture the taught and rigid physique of exploited men on film, just as it is thing very different act to print a headline reading “Protests in Kyiv turn Violent” and to circulate an image of an activist in the act of throwing a Molotov cocktail.

The language used by cultural anthropologists—among others—to discuss the mechanisms by which both text and image convey meaning has
been shaped in large part by the work of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. Saussure was interested not only in language but in how language gave rise to meaningful human thought. He criticized the characterization of language as a simple, “name-giving system” (2011, p. 16) which rested on the assumption that humans possessed a priori sets of categories or “ready-made ideas” (2011, p. 65). Instead, he proposed that all signs were composed of two parts, a signifier—a representation in some form—and a signified object, which had to be paired with one another in order for the object to be comprehensible or ‘thinkable’ (2011, pp. 66–67). In spoken or written language, Saussure’s primary area of work, the signifier and the signified would consist, respectively, of a sound-image, or perhaps even a written word like ‘tree’ on the one hand and, on the other, a single, whole concept or object, such as the large oak growing in my backyard. Each of these elements, the signifier and the signified, cannot be meaningful in any way without its connection to the other. A meaningless, gobbledygook word (a signifier without a signified) or an unnamed object or concept (a potential signified with no signifier) would be equally incomprehensible in the realm of spoken language and, Saussure argued, in human cognition. Only together do the signifier and the signified form what Saussure defined as a ‘sign’ – a fundamental unit of thinkable, expressible knowledge that can be used to transmit meaning from one interlocutor to another.

Charles S. Peirce, a nineteenth-century mathematician and logician from New England, built on Saussure’s ideas to theorize the nature of the relationship between the signifier and the signified. In his writing, he
articulated three different means by which a signifier and signified can be linked. He defined, therefore, three different kinds of signs that convey meaning in three distinct ways: ‘*icon,*’ in which the signifier and the signified are connected through a resemblance; ‘*index,*’ in which the signifier has an existential relationship with the signified (for example, a weather vein points in the direction of the wind, but is also physically turned by the wind; an index finger can indicate by pointing, but the finger must be pointing *at* the thing it is indicating in order to be meaningful); and ‘*symbol,*’ in which the connection between the signifier and the signified object is arbitrary, linked only by the culturally accepted association between the two\(^6\).

In this theoretical language, the act of extracting meaning from an image can be described as follows: A viewer looks at an image—say, a photograph of a抗议or in Kyiv preparing to launch a Molotov cocktail at an unknown target. The viewer interprets that image by considering what the visual signified being seen may represent. The viewer asks questions like *What does this image look like? Where have I seen similar images before? How does this image make me feel? How is the text surrounding this image telling me to interpret what I see?* The viewer taps into their repertoire of cultural and experiential knowledge in order to create a comprehensible, articulable concept in their mind of what is being looked at. Different sets of cultural knowledge, different experiences, and different levels of fluency in the semiotic systems used by professional image-makers (illustrators, photographers, etc.) can dramatically alter the nature of the meaning.

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\(^6\) Whether or not any sign can be truly “arbitrary” is a matter of much debate (c.f. Benveniste, 1971), but that is an argument for another paper.
extracted from any image. Meaning, therefore, is always constructed by the viewer.

It is important to recognize the flexibility inherent in the meaning of images to successfully unpack how imitation can be used in information warfare, especially since we are inclined to fall prey to the myth of photographic objectivity—the commonly held idea that photographs constitute an objective and unmediated representation of reality. This, of course, is self-evidently false. All images are crafted in some way or another: the size of the frame limits what gets captured; the chosen depth of field forces the viewer’s focus onto particular elements in the frame; exposure, lighting, shutter speed, even the context in which the image is displayed can influence the meanings that the viewer extracts from the image. Even something as simple as a written caption can dramatically alter the interpretation of visual media. This is what gives the myth of photographic objectivity so much power. All viewers lay eyes upon the same iconic “signifier” (i.e. the image in the photograph), fueling the belief that they have access to the identical information; however, their analytical minds will not necessarily attach the same meaning to that image. They see the same signifier, but not necessarily the same sign.

In imitation-based efforts of informational warfare carried out during Maidan and in the conflicts in Crimea and Donbas that followed, this belief in the concrete representation of photographic images and films was deliberately exploited for political purposes. Viewers were coached to believe that they saw, for example, grassroots self-defense brigades in Crimea. This sometimes worked, as the images audiences were presented
with showed groups that look quite a lot like what they came to recognize as self-defense brigades on the Maidan. Narratives are presented by the images makers as true not because they are true, but because they look to be true. This rhetorical move exploits the fluidity of what Roland Barthes calls “the third meaning” of images (Barthes, 1978) by granting the appearance of legitimacy to politically motivated claims. Though these claims cannot be fully evidenced (because they are not true), they accomplish their goals by generating faith in a false objectivity of the image (a false significance, to borrow Barthes’ term). They are able to insert a new, purposefully crafted truth without dislodging the viewer’s faith in the truth of the image, itself.

**Image and Imitation**

The symbolic universe of Maidan, the system of signs and meanings that brought the protest movement to life in the minds of its supporters, produced new styles of language, humor, ritual— a massive body of Maidan-specific lore. Sociologist Olexander Shulga has assessed that lore to be so rich and influential that it was able to fill a “symbolic vacuum” that had plagued Ukraine for more than 20 years. Maidan, Shulga argues, offered “a single matrix of meta meanings recognized by the majority of society” in a nation where such a matrix was long missing (Shulga, 2015, p. 231). Nataliya Bezborodova, who as extensively analyzed the linguistic and visual ephemera that circulated among Russian and Ukrainian speaking circles of Maidan supporters on social media, has characterized that lore as rooted in a fundamentally binary perspective of the conflict (2016). Maidan, in this view,
was a universe defined by opposing sides: us vs. them; protesters vs. the government. Representing this binary opposition through humor, criticism, or ritual allowed activists and supporters to forge new subjectivities within this new symbolic universe, “formulat[ing] who they are and who they are not, how they see themselves and the opposing side...” (Bezborodova, 2016, p. 128). Within this matrix of binaries, activities designed to spread disinformation through imitation seem almost ready-made, as it provides nefarious actors with the ability to deceptively flip-flop across the boundaries of those oppositional identities. Perhaps this is what made mimicry such a regular tactic as these political conflicts swept the nation.

The earliest and most obvious effort to imitate the iconicity of the Maidan protests was the production (and I do mean “production” in the theatrical sense of the word) of a pro-government rally and camp in Mariinsky Park, a green space located near major national government buildings within walking distance of the Maidan. This was a classic “Astroturf” or “fake grassroots” movement, with orchestrated gatherings posed as spontaneous public events. The Party of Regions, the political party that put Yanokovych into office, sponsored the transportation of hundreds, if not thousands, of persons from eastern and southern Ukraine into Kyiv to participate in this on-going counter protest, which soon came to be called AntiMaidan (“Maidan 2.0,” 2013). These AntiMaidan rallies were produced as deliberate forgeries of the Maidan protests. Flags and banners were carried by AntiMaidan participants throughout the park, resembling those carried on the Maidan. Stickering campaigns were undertaken, if unenthusiastically, around the park, similar in style and content to the varieties of stickers
printed and tagged around the center of Kyiv by Maidan supporters. Organized efforts to provide AntiMaidan protestors with hot meals mimicked the output Maidan’s kitchens, though they provided simple, lackluster foods like boiled buckwheat, which appeared dry and dull next to the rich soups and stews that were prepared for activists on the Maidan.

Toward the end of January 2014, interactions between police and protesters in Kyiv turned deadly. In response, Maidan activists began
organizing themselves into regimented self-defense brigades, which also became the subject of politically motivated imitation. Mostly male volunteers—but some female volunteers as well—formed tactical units and established clear chains of command across the other brigades. The overarching communication structure employed by Maidan self-defense was rooted in the existing hierarchical structure of the nationalist group Pravy Sektor. Though they were able to act independently, clearly defined chains of command across groups allowed the brigades to act in a coordinated fashion, covering different barricades on across shifts and combining forces to protect the camp when the streets turned violent. Each of these units was responsible for outfitting themselves. This meant that most brigades worked together to collect uniforms, purchase helmets and limb protection, and construct large shields meant to be used in phalanx form to push back walls of oncoming police officers. Though these brigades were composed of ordinary men, many of whom lived in the Kyiv area, I never once saw a brigade in uniform or travelling together outside of the barricades, despite living less than 2km from the camp and passing through the city center regularly.

The deceptive imitation of Maidan self-defense groups began on the night of February 6, 2014. Late that evening a group of five or six men were photographed by journalists from the newspaper Segodnya as they vandalized several prominent Kyiv businesses in the middle of the night. These photographs were published with a short report on the vandalism. These men were dressed in dark colors or in camouflage. They wore balaclavas on their faces and simple helmets on their heads. They carried
baseball bats and other homemade truncheons in one hand and shields made of plywood in the other. Some had sewn patches to their clothing, which bore the trident from the coat of arms of Ukraine, stitched out in the red and black colors often associated with Western Ukrainian nationalist organizations, such as Pravy Sektor. This group of men targeted two restaurants, smashing windows and spray-painting slogans like “Revolution!” and “Glory to the Nation!” on the walls of the buildings. According to the reports published, these men did not resist being photographed while committing these crimes.
At first blush, this might appear to be a Maidan self-defense brigade gone rogue. The group bears many of the markings of Maidan protestors: camouflage, body armor, hard hats, homemade riot shields, and nationalist insignias sewn into their clothing. The construction of these costumes was incredibly precise. However, a closer look at these images reveals this explanation to be implausible. First and foremost, their clothes were too clean. At the height of the violence in January and February, Maidan was coated in dirty ice, mud, oil, grease from burnt rubber, and all kinds of soot. Even while volunteers worked diligently to keep the interiors of the Ukrainian House and Trade Union building clean, the Maidan, itself, was filthy, as were the people who spent weeks on end living there. It is simply
too improbable that an entire group of self-defense volunteers would be
catched together, all of them all at once fresh from the laundry, presenting
themselves as Maidan supporters so far outside the protective barricades of
the protest camps. Second, their clothing was grossly inadequate for the
task of serving as self-defense volunteers. This gang was poorly dressed for
spending long stretches out in the cold, snowy winter. No less than two of
them men seen vandalizing buildings are wearing canvas sneakers—clean,
white canvas sneakers. The standard footwear for self-defense brigades was
leather boots, preferably steel toe, to keep feet warm and protect against
injury. Furthermore, this gang’s equipment was cheap and constructed
without any attention to detail. Real Maidan self-defense volunteers put a
great deal of care and effort into their gear. Some clearly benefitted from a
member who had access to a metal shop, all sporting immaculate replicas
of the body shields used by the Berkut, clearly homemade but of extremely
high quality nonetheless. Even brigades with more modest means—
including those who made shields from wood—took great care with these
items. They were shaped, sanded, decorated, strengthened where strength
was needed, padded at points of bodily contact; they were thoroughly and
thoughtfully designed. In contrast, the shields carried by these nighttime
vandals were flimsy—nothing more than an unfinished sheet of plywood
with a strap stapled to the back.

Given these inconsistencies—as well as the fact that it was highly
unusual to see a self-defense brigade away from the Maidan—the only
reasonable conclusion is that these men were impostors. It is unclear who
they were or who, if anyone, had sponsored them. Their technique,
however, is transparent to the trained eye. Since these men were out on the streets very late at night, when there would be almost no one passing by to observe their destructive activities, the capture and circulation of photographs was likely goal of their vandalism. Presumably this was an attempt to reduce trust in anti-government groups and stoke public fear of Maidan self-defense brigades. This theory is supported by the captions with which the photographs were published. A reprint in the paper *Ukrainska Pravda*, for example, printed these images with the phrase “the suspects again allow themselves to be photographed.” It was a poor attempt to mimic a Maidan self-defense brigade, because the embodiment of the characters being played was poor; nevertheless, it kept the visual image of self-defense volunteers at the forefront of the public imagination, all the while making claims that they were dangerous, radical young men who sought to bring harm to the city and its residents.

As the winter progressed towards spring, and the conflict shifted from Kyiv to Crimea and the Donbas region, the imitation of paramilitary tactics used at Maidan for the sake of political messaging continued. First, in late February 2014, large numbers of well-outfitted yet unmarked soldiers, later identified by Vladimir Putin’s own statements as members of the Russian military (Russia Today, 2014a), appeared in Crimea, setting the stage for the eventual annexation of the peninsula. In the first few weeks of this anonymous occupation, while the rest of the world was left to speculate about these soldiers’ origins, Putin declared the so-called “Little Green Men” keeping Crimea under military control to be not Russian troops but “local self-defense forces” (Chappell and Memmott, 2014). The Russian
news channel RT, which is well known for its soft propaganda campaigns carried out in the service of the Kremlin (Ioffe, 2010), covered the activities of these “self-defense units” with enthusiasm, describing the recruits as “ordinary civilians wanting to protect their families. All are volunteers. All are from Crimea” (Russia Today, 2014b).

In the subsequent month, these so-called self-defense forces expanded to include what appeared to be local men as well. Men in street clothes were photographed standing in front of local administration buildings holding homemade riot shields resembling those used by volunteers at Maidan—a clear attempt to imitate the iconography of Maidan self-defense brigades in a new setting for new purposes. Video taken by RT show these new recruits standing at makeshift barricades and block posts. These constructions were far cries from those built at the Maidan in Kyiv, most of them obviously flimsy or ineffective in their structure, but they were attempts to evoke the image of defensive barricades nonetheless.
This same tactic of presenting poor imitations of self-defense brigades in the media, facsimiles modeled after the brigades that formed in Kyiv several months prior, was also carried out in Donbas during the early
days of the separatist crisis. This mimicry ramped up quickly as agitators began destabilizing the area. Local men dressed in a variety of fatigues and balaclavas were recruited to stand guard at hastily constructed block posts along the highways. These same men lined up to ‘protect’ local administration buildings, and/or occupy them as the appointed staff from regional governments were forced out. Interestingly, paramilitary recruits in the separatist-controlled regions also made heavy use of barricades and block-posts, even (or, perhaps, especially) in places where they were of no strategic military use. Sandbags were piled up, barbed wire erected, and piles of debris were collected into shoddy, improvisational barriers.

It is of particular interest to this analysis that separatists in Donbas made heavy use of car tires in their construction of these roadblocks and barricades. Such tires were an important and incredibly prolific icon of the Maidan revolution. Self-defense brigades on the Maidan strategically stacked and ignited car tires to serve as barricades or as smoke screens in areas where police aggression was the most forceful. The use of smoke screens was a known tactic commonly used by Soviet military forces (cf. http://fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm100-2-1.pdf), and their use on the Maidan has generally been attributed to the influence of veterans from the Afghan War, who visibly offered their support to protesters following the first violent police attacks in late November 2013. Protesters have used tires for these purposes in other protests in places as far reaching as Bangkok and Syria. However, the use of tires for building smokescreens in Ukraine during
civil unrest was largely emergent at the Maidan protests. This was a strategic innovation that made use of a familiar tactic in a novel situation.


In Donbas, tires were also incorporated into the construction of barricades. In some cases, blockades were constructed out of nothing but piles of tires draped in barbed wire, to prevent anyone from climbing over them. Sometimes, tires and sandbags were used together to construct walls in highly visible areas in city centers. Often, these constructions became impromptu billboards for the posting of slogans and images in support of the separatist narrative. Often, tires made appearances that were largely
symbolic, appearing one or two at a time along roadblocks, punctuating the
domain of armed, masked men in homemade paramilitary uniform with this
new and potent symbol of popular uprisings. Whatever their ultimate utility
for anti-Ukrainian fighters in Donbas, tires were treated as though they
were a necessary element of blockades, despite the fact that tires make an
awkward and expensive construction material. This did not deter barricade
builders in the separatist region, however, as the purpose of the tires was
clearly not mechanical but symbolic. They were deployed a sign of a
serious grassroots movement that sought to resist government control;
they imitated the barricades at the Maidan in order to evoke the symbolism
of the Maidan.

Separatist barricades in Donetsk.
SAME SIGNIFIERS, NEW SIGNIFIES

The Information-Psychological War Operation reference guide, cited by Pomerantsev, defines two major approaches to psychological warfare. The first, “recognizes the primacy of objects in the world,” spinning the interpretation of those objects in one way or another; the second approach “puts information before objects,” seeking to disrupt the public’s engagement with evidentiary logic, creating “a linguistic sabotage of the infrastructure of reason” (Pomerantsev, 2015). The claims levied against the Maidan revolution and, later, against the post-Maidan government in Kyiv through acts of imitation engaged both of these approaches simultaneously. The concreteness—the “truth” of objects shown—is automatically centered in the art of the photograph. The myth of photographic objectivity tells us that this is so. At the same time, these imitations also produced signifiers that emerged from the revolution and dislodged their original meanings. Familiar images were translated into a different context, modified slightly, twisted just enough to push back on the protestors’ claims about what was happening in Kyiv—all without seeming overtly fallacious or implausible.
Consider, first, what the AntiMaidan protests in Mariinsky Park sought to imitate. The Maidan protests were framed by participating activists as an organic, truly grassroots movement. The politics of the revolution were, broadly speaking, Anti-Yanukovych and pro-EU (or at least pro- the prioritization of building EU relations through Ukrainian foreign and domestic policy). At their core, however, the rallies, the flags, the performances, the participation of citizens across social classes, even the volunteer self-defense efforts—all of these striking visuals connected back to a single object, a single signified: the imagined community of the “Ukrainian People” as a whole (Carroll, 2016). By opposing itself to the presidential regime of Viktor Yanukovych, and by enacting (or, in the case of the barricades, literally constructing) its defenses against the Berkut forces that Yanukovych controlled, the protesters effectively crafted a narrative of binary opposition, of Us vs. Them, wherein “they” are the government and “we” are The People, the driving force of the nation, which the government is morally obligated to serve and protect.

When the AntiMaidan protests first came together, many of the same visual codes were produced in an attempt to signify an authentic grassroots movement: the crowds in the field, the flags and banners they flew, even the modest meals and other forms of sustenance on which the protesters dined. AntiMaidan was a clumsy imitation of a grassroots movement; it was apparent that the Party of Regions had orchestrated the gatherings in an entirely top down fashion, managing every element from the transportation to and from the park to the brigade of soup cookers to the uniform printed pro-government ribbons and arm bands that
participants wore on their sleeves. Nevertheless, the outward appearance of a grassroots effort was the desired effect, crafted for the purpose of displacing the core object, the core signified, represented by the Maidan protests: the imagined community of the Ukrainian people. AntiMaidan reproduced the symbolism of the revolution to communicate that, yes, these activities are, indeed, the product of a true “people’s movement.” However, per these new claims, The People are not represented by Maidan; the true movement of the Ukrainian people can be found down the street at Mariinsky Park.

Similar displacements of signified objects guided the mimicry of self-defense brigades as well. On the Maidan, self-defense brigades came to represent the living manifestation of contemporary Ukrainian nationalism. Much of the symbolism engaged by self-defense brigades and their supporters made reference to historically significant forms of nationalism associated with the Ukrainian activist and militant Stepan Bandera, which continues to proliferate in the western region of Halychyna. This is a form of nationalism that evokes, for many, historical memory of violent politics and racially motivated killings. However, as I and others have argued (Carroll, 2014; Kvit, 2014), the reproduction of these symbols on the Maidan was, more often than not, undertaken not to promote an ethnically charged form of nationalism, but to narrativize the sacrifices made by the self-defense volunteers, to depict them as the heroes of an internal conflict that had drawn the Ukrainian people together in mutual service. Through these semiotic means, the brigades, and the iconic imagery of fatigues, helmets, and shields that visually defined them, came to represent self-
actualization, defiance in the face of oppression, and honorable yet dangerous service to the nation. These volunteers were offering themselves for the protection of the people (protecting “us”) from a violent government (from “them”)—from a very clear and present danger.

When imposter self-defense volunteers engaged in highly visible displays of vandalism outside of the Maidan encampments in Kyiv, the intent, again, was to produce an honest (or, at least, an honest enough) depiction of a Maidan self-defense brigade, colored in the signs and symbols of a historically recognizable Ukrainian nationalist paramilitary outfit. However, these men did not play the role of protectors; they played the role of violent perpetrators, of young hooligans excited by wanton violence and destruction. Rather than an organized force working to protect The People, they portrayed themselves as a radical unit that sought to disrupt and even attack The People—to attack “us.” The intended message was that Maidan self-defense brigades were, indeed, collections of young men inspired by Banderist nationalism; yet, these new claims tapped into the historical narratives that remember those Banderist philosophies as violent and dangerous. This mimicry sought to ensure the viewer that self-defense volunteers were who they said they were, and that is why they should be feared, not trusted or celebrated. In fact, a popular anti-Maidan narrative held that those who sought to remove Yanukovych from office were, in fact, militant neo Nazis who sought to incite ethnic violence in Ukraine (Weiss, 2015), and the physical appearance of the self-defense brigades served as excellent fodder for advancing this theory.
In contrast, when Maidan self-defense brigades were imitated in Crimea and Donbas, the symbolic meaning visually communicated by images of these “volunteers” shifted to levy a different set of claims altogether. In both of these locations, and especially in Crimea, self-defense units were portrayed as dedicated, honorable locals who sought to defy oppressive forces—as men who were committed to defending their homeland against an outside aggressors who would forcibly control or oppress them. The difference, this time, was that the outside aggressor was the post-Maidan Ukrainian government, and The People, the “us” deserving of protection, was again shifted from the crowds in Kyiv to the local residents of the Crimean region. Similarly, the use of tires in Donbas mimicked this specific signifier in order to draw on the emotional indices of Maidan. On the Maidan, tires came to symbolize many of the most positive and celebrated elements of the revolution; they represented the contribution of Ukrainians from all social and financial backgrounds. They represented a successful, self-made mobilization against violence. They represented the ability to protect oneself and one’s community. In Donbas, these abstract meanings were also invoked by the strategic display of tires, even where tires, in the material sense, were not strategically appropriate or helpful.

These deliberate imitations would not have been effective—or even possible—had the visual imagery they copied not already been well established and quite familiar to the public. The language of Saussure is helpful in explaining why. When visual images of Maidan began circulating across both journalistic and social media, these visual codes, these iconic
signifiers, took on meaning not only in broad public discourse but also in the imaginations of the individual members of the public. In other words, when the visual signifiers depicting different elements of the Maidan protests circulated, an associated signified (a meaning) of those icons, of the protests or of the protesters themselves, became associated and subsequently evoked in the minds of the viewers. This allowed the public to “think” Maidan, to move new categories of human action, political narrative, and social distinction into their cognition.

In parallel fashion, the recycling of the same visual signifiers through imitation assured that viewers would have a pre-existing signified to which they could anchor their understanding of this new visual material. This is why counter claims did not need to be sophisticated. They did not even need to make sense from a logical point of view. They simply needed to successfully evoke pre-conceived, comprehensible meanings in their viewers’ minds and then plug up the gaps in that mental image, tweaking small elements of that understanding to serve ulterior purposes. In this way, authors of this mimicry can be assured that their imitations are comprehensible to their audiences and that the desired meaning will be conveyed. They can even be confident that these narratives will feel somewhat “natural” by virtue of the fact that they are engaging pre-existing cognitive categories that have already been integrated into viewers’ worldview.

This mode of informational warfare through imitation can be thought of as a semiotic slight of hand. The iconic similarities between the original and the imitative visual images are exploited in order to evoke previously
associated objects and meanings, to blur the division between the new and old signifiers and, by extension, between the meanings (the signifieds) conveyed by each. Yet, by placing that new signifier into a different context, depicting rallies with a different political orientation, showing self-defense volunteers doing things they are not supposed to do or in different places dealing with different conflicts, these imitations shift the *indexical* meaning of these signifiers. By this, I am referring to the signified meanings that have existential relationships with their signifiers: they influence one another; they shape one another; they co-occur; they are tied to our emotional responses; they are tied to a specific time and place.

Thus, imitation attaches new meanings to old signifiers, so to speak. Elements of truth are cherry picked from the signs being imitated and are carefully transplanted into new iterations that look like the same thing. “Yes, this is what it looks like when The People rise up, but these are The True People over here in Mariinsky Park; those protesters in Maidan are fascists.” “Yes, self-defense brigades in Kyiv are Ukrainian nationalists. That is why you should be afraid of them.” “Of course, self-defense brigades will form when a dignified people are threatened by an intolerable aggressor. That’s exactly what happened in Crimea, and what is happening still in Donbas.” These twists are simple, but they are also effective. In part, this helps illuminate why misinformation through imitation is such a successfully divisive tactic. Either the new, propagandistic meaning is successfully transmitted and the original values assigned to an image are framed as fraudulent, or the mimicry is seen for what it is, the original signifieds are not displace, and the counter narrative is seen as a farce. In
other words, this strategy is either going to work very well, or it is not going to work at all. There is no in between, and divergent audiences are left with little common ground

THE PATTERN CONTINUES...
Though the AntiMaidan movement may have been an artificial production of a now defunct regime, and though we may never know who sponsored the imposter self-defense volunteers in Kyiv or the tire-lined barricades in Donbas, the semiotic slight-of-hand described in this article is worthy of ongoing scholarly attention, as it remains a key tool in Russia's international propaganda experiment. This tactic still appears in both official and unofficial Russian media channels. RT (Russian Today), arguably the dominant foreign mouth piece of the Russian government for the English speaking world, has made a general practice of exploiting iconic similarities between images in order to drag the larger emotional and political meaning—the indexical meanings—of those images into their preferred narrative frame. Journalist Christopher Miller, who has covered the Crimean annexation and the war in Donbas extensively for the Kyiv Post and Mashable, has described this rhetorical move as the creation of “whataboutisms,” noting that this method was particularly prevalent in Russian reporting of the civil unrest in the U.S. cities of Ferguson and Baltimore in 2015 (Miller, 2015a). Miller has also published a collection of
screenshots from RT’s video program entitled “In the Now,” which depict iconically similar photographic images of Kyiv’s Maidan protests and from Baltimore’s 2015 unrest side by side. The goal of these broadcasts, overtly stated, was to highlight so-called hypocrisy of the U.S. government, allegedly evidenced by the presidential administration’s different responses to the two events. RT’s image collage suggests, by means of the myth of photographic objectivity, they these events are, in fact, equivalent. As Miller reported, the host of RT’s “In the Now,” Anissa Naouai, made the following statement as the images were being aired: “Maidan versus Maryland. Don’t let the media decide. Not even us. You can see for yourselves. The similarities—well, they speak for themselves” (Miller, 2015a). Here, the use of familiar signifieds to generate new, politically motivated meaning in the viewers’ minds is overt.

Through unofficial channels, this rhetorical move has been taken up with creative abandon. For example, Twitter user @Afromaydan, a play on words that joins the name Maidan with a reference to people of black African ancestry, has been a prolific generator of Internet memes critical of the U.S. government. These memes carry meaning by altering indexical references and exploiting iconic similarities—informational warfare by means of imitation. Two illustrative examples of this stylized mimicry can be found in the Twitter user’s posts dating from April 28 and 29, 2015, during the height of the civil unrest in Baltimore. One post contains two edited images (each with a seemingly violent protestors crudely pasted into the image to appear as though they
are attacking riot police) side by side. The photo on the left is labeled “Maidan, 2014.” It is accompanied by a quote from Barack Obama, which reads, “We strongly advise everyone to respect the right to peaceful protest in Ukraine.” The photo on the right is labeled “Baltimore, 2015.” Under this title, a different quote from Barack Obama appears: “The marauders in Baltimore must be considered criminals. The violence had nothing to do with peaceful protests.” The implication of the meme is that President Obama has responded differently, and therefore hypocritically, to each of these events despite the allegedly obvious fact (signaled by the iconic similarities between the two images) that these events are substantively equivalent. This technique has also been engaged for seemingly humorous (though clearly racist) purposes, as can be seen in the April 28 meme that shows the face of a Black man superimposed onto a portrait of a well-known separatist fighter in Donetsk with the nomme de guerre “Babay” or “Boogeyman.” The caption reads “Boogeyman 2.0 – Baltimore, rebooted somewhere in the Baltimore People’s Republic.” The implication seems to be that the legitimate demands for civil rights being made by African-American residents in Baltimore are equivalent in type and in legitimacy to those made by separatist forces in Donetsk.
Furthermore, soon after public attention on the Maidan revolution and Ukraine’s war in the Donbas region waned, Russian television channels transitioned from constant coverage of Ukraine to exclusive reporting from the conflict in Syria (Miller, 2015b; Weiss, 2015). Policy analyst Edward Lucas offered the following interpretation of this change:

The first target in all this is Russian public opinion. The soap opera in Ukraine is over. The heroic separatists, their evil fascist foes, and the cynical Western meddlers have been retired. The new entertainment is a thrilling and exotic epic set in Syria, with the Assad regime as the heroic defenders of civilized values, Russian [sic] their valiant allies and the West as the defenders of jihadist barbarians. (Politico Magazine, 2015)
In short, the careful crafting of narrative is again underway, and with so much of the Russian government's media resources directed towards online video and television publications, we can be confident that visual imagery will be central to these narrative campaigns and this method of semiotic slight of hand will continue to be in the Russian propaganda playbook.

What is more, since this technique of information warfare relies on the ability of images to invoke pre-existing concepts and narratives in the minds of the viewer, these imitations necessarily tap into widely shared elements of Eastern European culture and the lived experience of Russian and Ukrainian people today. These campaigns both create locally relevant cultural artifacts and are locally relevant culturally artifacts, themselves. It is therefore important for cultural and political scholars of Russia and the post-Soviet sphere more broadly to watch closely as these techniques proliferate. The more propagandistic images are produced, the more the...
authors of these images reveal about the ideology that shapes the rhetoric of these images and, by extension, the worldview from which they are conjured.
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THE SOURCES OF POPULISM IN EAST CENTRAL EUROPE

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Abstract. Populism revels itself in both rich and poor countries. By focusing on the cases of Poland, Romania and Ukraine, Authors test the political theory of populism proposed by Acemoglu, Sonin and Egorov (2011). The theory links the emergence of populism to the weakness of democratic institutions. The theory holds true in at least three selected cases. This study shows that the rapid economic liberalization in Poland and Romania raised the social discontent in significant part of population. The most vulnerable groups relied on the support from the state, on the one hand, but on the other hand sought for rapid improvement. Paternalistic and patriotically colored expectations contributed to the emergence of the right-wing populism, which is more conservative in Poland, but more nationalist in Romania. In Ukraine, by contrast, the lack of reform has led to the emergence of social populism, which, however, is masked in both right and left political projects. Finally, we note a negative relationship

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between populism and the state of democracy in the countries surveyed. Based on Freedom House democratization index we found that the populist governments are not contributing to the strength of democracy. This thesis, however, requires testing it on larger number of cases.

**Keywords:** the weakness of democratic institutions, paternalistic expectations, conservative populism, nationalist populism, social populism, democratization, Poland, Romania, Ukraine.

The entire text of this article is available in Ukrainian.
RIGIDITY OF THE GENERALIZED OTHER

NARROWNESS OF THE OTHERNESS AND DEMODERNIZATION

IN THE FRAMEWORK OF SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

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Abstract. Author of this article uses symbolic interactionism, social psychology and psychoanalysis to analyze modernization and demodernization phenomena. Due to application of Mead’s symbolic interactionism, Author manifests how the dominance of the Generalized Other is present in the both phenomena. Author argues that in the process of modernization Super-Ego is being invested into modern institutions as the Otherness. This Otherness functions in the forms of automatisms and “recursions in the past” that postcolonial societies often demonstrate at the margins of modernity.

Keywords: symbolic interactionism, social psychology, psychoanalysis, otherness, modernization/demodernization
From a sociological viewpoint, if *modernization* and *demodernization* phenomena wish to be seen as components of a pair whose elements are one the inverse of the other, then it is need to consider a minimal but rigorous theoretical construct which includes and explains them as such. For instance, the psycho-sociological construct of *Generalized Other*, as originally formulated by George Herbert Mead within *symbolic interactionism* context, might be able to accomplish this end.

**Symbolic Interactionism**

To explain the fashion in which internal mental world is in relation with the external and social world of objects, events and persons, William James introduced the fundamental notion of *Self*, the primary datum of psychology, the articulation point between the individual (who knows) and the society (who is known), in which he identifies two main components or agencies, the *I* (the aware) band the *Me* (the known); they usually are distinct entities but cannot be separated of each other. The former refers to the aware subject, able to undertake own initiatives in regard to external reality besides to reflect on herself or himself; the latter is those parts of the Self which are known to the *I*, the objective and empirical aspects of the Self, what I see and perceive of myself, as well the manner in which I look to myself. The agency *Me* contains those constituent and real parts which build the known Self, including the material characteristics of the *bodily Me* (e.g., the perceived body and its self-representation by individual, the various things owned by the individual, etc.), the social ones of the *extracorporeal-social Me* (i.e., how the subject sees herself or himself with
respect to her or his relationships with others) and those spiritual of the
spiritual Me (to be aware of herself or himself, able to think and reflect on
herself or himself, to respond to given psycho-physiological mechanisms,
to feel ethic and moral instances, and so forth). For James, everyone
organizes her or his own Me according to a hierarchic structure which
assigns different values and estimations to the various material, social and
spiritual components constituting the Me. James puts the bodily Me at the
lowest level, the Spiritual Me at the highest level, and the extracorporeal-
social Me at the intermediary levels, so providing a rigid scheme to the Self
construct. The rigidity or flexibility issues of the Self, will be a central
problem of the next social psychology.

After James, Charles H. Cooley stated that only through social
interaction the individual will develop the knowledge of herself or himself
and the feeling of own identity. In this regard, Cooley introduced the notion
of looking glass self to mean the basic idea according to which we are the
result of the way in which others perceive us and work out an opinion upon
us. Therefore, the awareness and esteem of ourselves arise in what we see
mirrored from others, on the basis of the various appreciations, opinions,
bases and presuppositions of the given membership group in which an
individual lives, that is to say, of who is deemed to be relevant, important
and meaningful (significant others), until up to mould our own sense of
reality on the basis of their social-cultural models.

On the basis of James and Cooley ideas, Mead further deepen the
social matrix of the development of the Self. He stated that the
configuration of consciousness (of own Self) may be thought as the result
of the cooperative action of either the capability of producing as well as responding to the various symbols and the competence of undertaking the behaviours of others. According to Mead, the Self does not pre-exist at the birth, because the human mental functions begin to run only when two indispensable conditions occur, precisely when an individual is able to produce and respond to *symbols* (symbolic function), whence to symbolically appoint the objects of her or his environment, as well as when he or she is able to undertake behaviours and attitudes of others (*significant others*). Only when the individual is able to make reference to the objects of her or his own environment through symbols, then the Self starts to have a private and autonomous existence. From this moment onwards, the Self is one of these objects, and its minimal required components are the *name* and the personal pronouns with their use, i.e., I, me, my, and so forth. Thanks to the language, Self achieves its status of object. Indeed, with these basic linguistic terms, it will be possible to distinguish and identify the Self as one of the many objects of her/his own world. Before acquiring effective linguistic capabilities, every human performs reciprocal actions with others, mainly made by gestures which lead to the accomplishment of the act.

On the basis of Darwinian evolution theory, Mead considers *gesture* as the key of any social act. This gestural conversation has also a symbolic nature and precedes the proper language, becoming just this latter when the symbolic meanings conveyed by gestures are commonly accepted and shared within a given social group according to an organized and collective representational system which will structurate the mind of each group’s
member. So, the individual is able to give, through interpretation, a meaning to her or his own gesture and those of others, as well as forecasting consequences and controlling related actions and responses. Accordingly, when an individual may intentionally use the pre-existent symbolic systems commonly shared within those social groups in which he or she is involved, then he or she has acquired a Mind, i.e., the chief mediating symbolic means between the individual and the others. The more the language enriches, the world of objects richer and enlarger, so comprising objects of everyday life, physical things and phenomena, relationships, and so on.

Language, meant in its widest sense, is the chief tool allowing each individual to take part to a given social action. The social organization of the action is closely related to either the unavoidable dimension of social hierarchy and its control, and the subjective usage of social norms. Every object undergoes to valuations, comparisons, and expectations. This also concerns the Self that, in such a manner, it is the result of the various behaviours, evaluations, comparisons, and expectations of others. These latter – who surround the child puts inside a certain social group where the main communication means is the language – adopt certain behaviours in her or his regard, and just these behaviours are the basis for the inferences that child performs with respect to the particular type of object who he or she is deemed to be. In this way, child shall become more or less differentiated with respect to either the others and herself or himself. The capability of developing further the Self, depends on both the intrinsic
meaning and organization of the family (or else, the caregivers), of the social groups, and of the community, these latter all together considered.

Consciousness, therefore, is not a pre-social endowment that distinguishes humans from animals, but rather it is the outcome of the interpersonal interaction allowing both the communication through meaningful symbols and the capability of individual to identify oneself with others and looking herself or himself from that standpoint. This takes place through the sequential performance of two main processes: a simple play and an organized game. Through a simple play, the child undertakes, one after the other, roles, attitudes and behaviours of the individuals who are in touch with her or him, learning and regulating the development of her or his own Self, introducing into herself or himself the organization made by the other personalities (so giving rise to the Significant Others). He or she plays in doing mother, father, policeman or policewoman, teacher, fireman, doctor, and so on; often, also animal behaviours are imitated. In this first phase, for instance, the social role is loosely interiorized, starting to become an object of herself or himself as she or he sees herself or himself just from the role that she or he is undertaking, for example playing to buy something that herself sells to her if, for instance, she has undertaken the role of mother. But, in this first phase, the interiorization of the given social role is only partial, that is to say, the child is able to build up only partial traits of her or his Self, not organically joined together. In the second phase of the organized game, instead, the child acquires the capability to undertake all the possible roles (role-taking), attitudes and behaviours of all the others involved in a common activity with her or him.
He or she will be able to coordinate the social task required by the role undertook by him or her.

Differently from the first phase, where the child undertakes all the roles, attitudes and behaviours in a sequential, automatic and indiscriminate manner, at most temporally ordered, in the second phase instead the child must possess and interiorize, at the same time, all these roles, attitudes and behaviours of the others, which must be owned in herself or himself. In this last event, in some way, he or she should interiorize all these roles, attitudes and behaviours of all the participating members of the given game in which he or she is involved. Only in this latter phase, therefore, all the partial components of the Self, already acquired in the first phase, may be harmoniously organized to give rise a unitary, organic and even more mature and structured Self in dependence on the related reactions and responses of the these others. In this manner, child will acquire and internalize in herself or himself the set of all the perceived roles, attitudes and behaviours of all the others who are in touch with her or him, so giving rise to the Generalized Other, say, that is to say, the individual expression of the explicit and structured responses of all the other members of the given social group, the universalization of the process of undertaking roles, attitudes and behaviours of the others, so that the Generalized Other is the set of all the roles, attitudes and behaviours of the whole social group. Furthermore, once acquired this latter, he or she should be able, in dependence on his or her degree of free will, to intentionally (hence, individually) choose some members belonging to his
or her Generalized Other, to give rise the subset of the Significant Others, say, for him or her.

Therefore, the type, the qualitative and quantitative features and the related amplitudes either of and , just depend on the modalities and forms of development of these two Meadian phases of the simply play and of the organized game, with a particular attention to the second one. Mead defines Generalized Other as the community or the organized social group that, perceived by individual, allows her or him to build up and structure the unity of her or his own Self. The constitution of the Generalized Other is a chief undertaking act of roles, attitudes and behaviours, which is therefore realized in its widest universality. Thanks to this last universality feature, the individual acquires an objectivity skill: in fact, with this basic process of integration, inclusion and participation to a given community or social group, the individual is sure that world appears to the others as it appears to her or him. In such a manner, he transcends her or his own personal experience and, just thanks to various forms of communication (among which is language), he or she discovers that his or her experience is shared by others, and with reciprocal comparisons, he or she becomes able to distinguish his or her private experience from the public one. In a few words, undertaking roles, attitudes and behaviours of the Generalized Other, the individual becomes an organic, integrated and included aware member of the given communities or social groups with which he or she is in touch. The social life is thus founded, interpreted and established upon the set of the social interpersonal relationships, as well as on the roles, attitudes and behaviours which such a set gives rise (Doise et al., 1980;
Roles, attitudes and behaviours of others, organized and implemented into the Self, give rise the Me, that is to say, the ‘rational’ part of Self which reflects the social structure. The I, instead, is the creative and reconstructive part of the Self, built upon the Me, the principle of personal action, thanks to which the individual is not fully alienated and uniquely determined by society, but he or she may act upon the same social structure in which he or she lives, with an extremely variable degree of change depending on many variables. The Self springs out from the interactions between I and Me, which are its reciprocally correlated and inseparable founding parts. The basic dialogue between these two agencies, is a transposition, at the individual level, of the various processes which link together each individual with the others, and their reciprocal interactions. The manifestation of the Self, thus, always entails the presence, current or past, of some other, since it cannot exist any normal psychic experience of herself or himself simply provided by ourselves. In fact, vegetals and animals only react to their environment, without the possibility of making any experience of themselves. Furthermore, it is well-known to which severe pathological conditions of psychic destructuration every human being incurs when is subjected to extreme conditions of isolation. Indeed, in many case of psychoses, Me agency is quite frail, or not functioning, or else not grasped by individual, with a net predominance of a non-controlled I. The Me, as is the personal reflection of society or community, becomes a convergence point of many and often contradictory
social expectations, so that the crucial relations between \( Me \) and \( I \) lead to a mediation between conformism and innovation, between impulsive responses and controlled ones. Mead furthermore claimed that both components of the Self, i.e., the objective (with censorship functions) \( Me \) and the subjective (individual action promoting under \( Me \) control) \( I \), may be empirically picked up. The study of the \( Me \) is the comprehension of herself or himself as object, while the study of the \( I \) is the knowledge that every subject has of her or his own experiences of continuity, distinction, volition and reflection on herself or himself. Mead’s work has casted the foundations for the psycho-social study of \( Self \) (Doise et al., 1980; Brede, 1980; Conti & Principe, 1989; Palmonari, 1989; Waters, 1994; Palmonari et al., 2002; Contarello & Mazzara, 2002; Gallino, 2006).

For Mead, the consciousness has therefore a social origin. The child observes and undertakes roles, behaviours and attitudes of the others, especially those showed toward herself or himself, so inferring to what classification type of individuals he or she belongs, in respect to the eyes of others. As said above, the Self arises when the individual accrues the capability of becoming object to herself or himself. This takes place by means of the primary process of undertaking roles, attitudes, behaviours and perspectives of others. To be precise, as already said above, the configuration of consciousness may be thought as due to the \textit{internalization} (so providing the Meadian \( Me \)) of: \textit{i}) the roles, attitudes and behaviours that living community, or its sectors, have manifested with respect to either her or him, and other subjects belonging or not to this community, but however in touch with her or him (\textit{Generalized Other}); \textit{ii}) the customs, norms and
rules prescribed by the living community that human being has learned to accept and generalize by means of the development of different roles and behaviours as well as interpreting the roles and behaviours of other persons, and acting on her or him by the influence of a certain historical series of *Significant Others*, accordingly determined. The latter include every individual, or group of individuals, who, as inserted into a certain net of established social relations, plays, or has played in the past, a social-cultural role having special and remarkable importance as well as relevance for a given human being until up to be able to modify or shape her or his behaviours, and, in certain situations, the related social actions.

As said above, the Generalized Other is meant, by Mead, as the whole community or all the organized social groups, which provide the Self’s unity to each individual member; the roles, attitudes and behaviours of the Generalized Other are nothing but the roles, attitudes and behaviours of the whole community or social group. With the undertaking of the attitudes and behaviours of the Generalized Other (role-taking), together its related symbolisms, the individual becomes an organic, included and aware member of the society.

Thanks to Generalized Other, the social process influences roles, behaviours and attitudes of the individuals involved in it, who, in turn, partially contribute subjectively to develop such a process. Thus, the Self is mainly a process which arises from the past (i.e., social-cultural memory, which is deeply rooted in every human being) and builds up with the interactions and contacts of the individual with other individuals belonging to her or his community, so mirroring ideas, judgements, social-cultural
models, ideas and ethics that the given community or social group provides to her or him. As recalled above, the Self cannot yet manifest itself without the presence of some other, that is to say, its existence necessarily relies on the Alterity or Otherness (see later), precisely on the general reference frames provided by the society or community which is always symbolically present in the mind of every individual or member of it, through the Me agency. To be aware of herself or himself, an individual must interiorize the roles, attitudes and behaviours of others to control the actions who he or she is undertaking. Nevertheless, the (creative) I has either the individual function to subjectively face and reply to the various social-cultural agencies, roles, manners and instances internalized through the Me, trying possibly to modify them, and imprinting a personal character to every member of a community or social group, who has internalized its roles, behaviours and attitudes by means of communication with others. As said above, the communication among members of a given social group, takes place thanks to the occurrence of the language which employs commonly shared organized symbols and which are understood just thanks to a mediated capacity to use symbols that Mead, as said above, calls Mind (Doise et al., 1980; Palmonari, 1989; Assmann, 1997; Palmonari et al., 2002; Contarello & Mazzara, 2002; Gallino, 2006).

**Psychoanalysis and Sociology**

Notwithstanding that, there may exist different social groups to which a given individual belongs or, however, is in touch, and which may often provide contradictory or antagonist roles, attitudes or behaviours, within
Generalized Other, along the route of formation of the Self. Mead has provided scant answers to this last question, to whose lack perhaps psychoanalysis might supply. Indeed, some psychodynamic notions, tools and concepts, amongst which is the identification process, enable to understand and explain how an individual may conform or adhere to social-cultural models, customs and traditions. Likewise, the psychoanalysis, making appeal to certain defence mechanisms suitably extended from individuality to collectivity, may concur to explain in which fashions institutional constraints, besides to contain and restrain human drives, are able to produce heterogeneities and make distinguishing individual differences, which allow to go beyond conformism. But, importantly, Mead reconnects institutions to his concept of Me. Indeed, an institution, according to Mead, is meant as the collective organization of a certain set of roles, attitudes and behaviours commonly shared and symbolically recognized by each member through her or his Mind, hence internalized by means of the Me agency which will determine, regulate and control (often unconsciously) the consequent social action and conduct; accordingly, the I, in its relationships with the Me, will provide the awareness agency. In passing, we recall that the influence of culture and society in the formation of human personality, from a psychoanalytic standpoint, has been above all studied by neo-Freudians and anthropologists of the culture and personality trend, amongst whom are E. Fromm, K. Horney, V. Kardiner, R. Linton and Margaret Mead, for instance through the introduction and use of the central notion of basic personality and its multimodalities. Furthermore, many relationships amongst the theoretical construct of Generalized Other and the notion of Freudian
Super-Ego exist, and, in this regard, particularly interesting and useful is, above all, Talcott Parsons interpretation and use of Freudian psychoanalysis in theoretical sociology.

Along this line of thought, on the other hand, there also exist further strict relationships amongst the constructs of Generalized Other and Freudian Super-Ego, even to reach the ideological notion of national identity. For instance, due to the chiefly unconscious nature of the Meadian Me, a possible link between the Freudian Super-Ego and the Generalized Other might be, for instance, identified just through the Meadian Me agency upon which, as we have just seen above, relies the notion of social institution, so being able to justify its deep unconscious features as, for instance, claimed by Claude Lévi-Strauss, who had already spoken and treated of an unconscious structure of social institutions (Pagnini, 1977; Mueller, 1978; Doise et al., 1980; Brede, 1980; Carotenuto, 1992). In a few words, along the axis Parsons-Mead, just due to the close relationships between the Generalized Other and the Meadian Me, we are able to consider those deep and unavoidable (collective) unconscious features which link together Freudian Super-Ego, Generalized Other and Me agencies in account for the possible unconscious relationships which join together collective (official and, above all, non-official) institutions and organizations with the formation of individual personality and its action, and vice versa. Since second half of 20th century, many studies of sociology have pointed out the relevance of certain unconscious aspects underlying institutions and laws (Contarello & Mazzara, 2002: pp. 74-77). We are of the opinion that such possible unconscious aspects should not be fully
negligible at a sociological level simply because social-political organizations, institutions and structures are however made by individuals who act and think according to their wills, desires and drives, even commonly and socially shared by a community. This is partially supported, for instance, by those postcolonial studies on the persistence of past traces of previous colonial dominations in those modern states where however related decolonization processes taken place. This stands out the importance to take into account, in terms of a historical-dialectic relation, past colonial situations in understanding, at any level, the current or present setting of any state which may be classified as an ex-colony. So, the unconscious realm, as depositary of the archaic dimensions of human existence, is under the thin layer of civility, so underdetermining contemporary life (Bastide, 1972; Turkle, 1978; Collins, 1980; Obholzer & Roberts, 1994; Goodrich, 1995; 1996; Goodrich & Carlson, 1998; Contarello & Mazzara, 2002; Cuche, 2004; Armstrong & Obholzer, 2005; Mellino, 2005; Meloni, 2005; Dei, 2012; Lanteigne, 2012; Matera & Biscaldi, 2012a).

**Formalizing modernization/demodernization phenomena**

On the other hand, many of the above concepts, in first place those concerning the others, may be usefully related with the wider and complex notion of *Alterity* or *Otherness*, which refers to what is *other* from that is given as one, as identical, as subject, and as person. Thus, alterity is a basic and crucial notion, dating back to Aristotle, closely related to these latter and inseparable from them (Pagnini, 1977; Laplanche, 1999; Abbagnano, 2008; Aime, 2008; Costa, 2011; Kilani, 2011): with respect to what is given
as one, it is indicative of multiplicity (*ontological alterity*); with respect to the identical, it is the opposite (*logical alterity*); with respect to the subject (Ego), it is the object (Alter) (*epistemological alterity*); and, with respect to the person (Ego), it is the other, or the Other (Alter) (*existential* or *transcendental alterity*). This polisemantics of the notion of alterity, gives rise, therefore, to a founding problem of philosophy because such a term entails the difficult task of establishing all the possible relationships between the main constitutive terms of the Being, so that such a really crucial problem, dialectically refers as well to the total unity of these last basic constitutive elements of alterity, as well as to an integration of their various meanings. So, in rigorous terms, we might not separate sharply one type of alterity from the remaining ones (Michele F. Sciacca). However, we are particularly interested in that alterity’s term which refers to the person, namely the *existential alterity*, in which the notion of *Self* is placeable, but in general the complex Meadian dynamics between the constitutive and inseparable elements *I* and *Me* within *Self*, reflects and comprises almost all the above terms of aspects of the alterity: for instance, the dialectic and inseparable relations between *I*, which is the subjective part of the Self, and *Me*, which is the objective part of the Self, reflects the epistemological alterity, while the attendance of the Generalized Other with respect to the Self reflects almost all the remaining aspects of Alterity that, as seen above, may have a pluralistic sense due to its wide meaning variegation whose aspects or terms are all potentially or implicitly, universally available, establishable and actualizable. What we wish to mainly point out in this contribution, is a possible correlation between the Alterity and its semantic variegation on the one hand – this being meant as more or less
'institutionally' established, actuated and actualized, collectively and largely recognized, more or less equally guaranteed and suitably available – and the modernization-demodernization phenomena on the other hand, correlation which is established inside the symbolic interactionism framework by means of the contributions of either psychoanalysis and social psychology. The Generalized Other, is nothing but the set of those terms of Alterity which are, within a given social-cultural context actualized, established and available in a certain historical moment considered together its legacy (i.e., its social-cultural memory), so that we may write. Finally, the set of Significant Others, is then individually chosen, more or less freely and knowingly, among the possible elements of, even individualistically acquired (by Me) but at unconscious level, so that formally. Therefore, . Any collectively organized community or group is basically called to institute, or to establish, just by means of those which will be said to be its public institutions, those elements of the set which will give rise to the individually available (albeit unconsciously acquired by Me) from which, then, each individual member will choose, again more or less freely and knowingly, via Meadian Me, her or his set of Significant Others, so allowing the acquisition of her or his social-cultural patterns with which her or his I will be in dialectic relationship (with the Me) to build up her or his own Self. This last, as said above, builds up upon the acquired Me, with which the I will then enter in dialectic and inseparable relation, the former being just provided by that, in turn, arises from the available. From that, the primary importance of the latter for the rising and building of the Self, the number, nature, structure and the reciprocal
interrelations of its subsequent components depending just on the variety of, hence of.

Thus, the range of the set of all the Significant Others enables the personal rising, acquisition and development of the more or less pluralistic sense of Otherness (or Alterity) – as seen above – provided by public or collective institutions, in dependence on its amplitude, heterogeneity, diversification, flexibility and variety of composing elements considered together with their interrelations. The larger is the set of the institutionally recognized, actualized and rightly settled, terms available of the Otherness, the wider is the series of possibilities can be individually chosen, via, to get. This set of Significant Others, may give rise therefore to a formal structure whose composition and dimensions might be formally characterized also in terms of dynamical system theory, for example following Lévi-Strauss’ use of thermodynamic notions in working out his theory of cold and hot societies, and the related theory of progress (Remotti, 1971; Nannini, 1981). In any case, this formal internal parametric characterization of the Otherness (or Alterity) by means of the individual series of Significant Others, in turn may imply a further, possible formal characterization of the individual Generalized Other, as it contains the former, that is, . So, we are inclined to think that modernization-demodernization phenomena might be influenced by this possible formal parametrization of the Generalized Other by means of the series of the Significant Others. In this regard, we are also disposed to think formally that a paucity of the series of the Significant Others, as well as a rigidity of the Generalized Other, or else a certain narrowness of the sense of Altery
(or Otherness) or again a shrinkage of the set of its terms (as seen above), are all sufficient conditions which lie at the early and deep structural bases of demodernization phenomena because, for example, such formal conditions may shrink the variety and nature of the dualistic and dialectic relationships between I and Me, i.e., the unavoidable basis for building up own Self, with a consequent flattening towards the latter (conformism), while a narrowness of the Otherness, anyway institutionally imposed, would surely entail a scant assortment of the Generalized Other (i.e., Me) individualistically acquirable, whence a shortness of the series of the Significant Others, as for example surely implied by a social-cultural-political institutional lacking just related with . Therefore, deficiency, rigidity or unilaterality of collective institutions are conditions which would imply a narrowed sense of the already polisemantic Alterity (or Otherness) and vice versa, hence a rigidity of the Generalized Other, whence a poorness of the series of the Significant Others, that is to say, demodernization pushes.

Often, restraints or limitations to modernization and progress rely on unconscious places, on which, as said above, lean public institutions themselves (Lévi-Strauss and others). On the other hand, possible unconscious phenomena may be also contemplated within this our framework just through the unconscious features of the Generalized Other, individually belonging to the Meadian Me, if one takes, for instance, into consideration what has been said above on the relationships and the many common points between the Me agency and the last Freudian conception of Super-Ego agency. In this respect, as a first example, we would like to
look at that particular sociological phenomenon of persistence, in the social-cultural memory (also meant in the sense of Jan Assmann (1997)) of local unconscious vestiges regarding public institutions and general law, as witnessed for example by the meaningful and emblematic case study made by Mikhail M. Minakov on post-Soviet demodernization (Minakov, 2015), who has opened, for first, an international talk just on this phenomenology which deserves further considerations and investigations. Indeed, notwithstanding the appreciable efforts toward modernization explicitly claimed by post-Soviet constitutions of 1990s, beyond twenty years later, these claims of novelty have been replaced with the implicit search for the old, the comeback of the “unburied past” which had not been properly reflected upon, within a cyclic circuit in which modernization and demodernization phases alternate of each other. This, according to Minakov, is just due to an unexpected rigidity of Soviet society whose modernization did not lead to the full elimination of the traditional forms of life – which, in our terms, have lain tacit or dormant, that is to say, unconscious – characterized by recurring disruption forces throwing post-Soviet societies from attempts of fast modernization back to neo-traditionalist regimes referring to archaic values, rules and practices, even to be similar to certain ones dating back to the medieval period, as a kind of unconscious persistence of vestiges of ancient values, rules and practices (mainly by enculturation); this, in perfect coherence with that trend of postcolonial studies, just mentioned above, which is turned to identify, in the current setting, the still present traces of past dominators politics and institutions of those countries which have been variously involved in colonization historical processes (Mellino, 2005). The main
common features of post-Soviet archaization can be just seen in comparison of related post-Soviet regimes and institutes. Minakov points out just the paradoxical behaviour of these processes, i.e., modernization leading to new traditional rules, directly related with a kind of “track of history” seen as a failure of reforms, revolutions and other modernizing forms of political creativity and innovation. This is a remarkable and emblematic instance of how an institutional lack, i.e., a narrowness in the official actuation of the Otherness, may entail or promote a demodernization phenomenon whose early origins should be retraced in the local history of a given region. This because of the deep and tangled spatial-temporal structure of demodernization phenomena.

All this seems enough to corroborate what has been proposed in this contribution about the pivotal role played by Otherness (with its related more or less individualistic constructs) and its official institutional actuation and establishment, in trying to formally mould modernization-demodernization phenomena, although in a very elementary fashion. Therefore, the case studies quoted above are simple but emblematic instances of the persistence of local unconscious vestiges in official institutions through the Otherness construct, which still persist and hand down in the social-cultural memory of a given organized collectivity, so influencing its nature, structure and further development, hence, through the related and (more or less) individualistic constructs, contributing as well to affect the formations of the social character of any social member of it, from the standpoint of symbolic interactionism. This discussion is therefore carried out according to that trend of sociology which confides in
the strong influence exerted by social factors, structures and relations in
the constitution and development of human personality, just through the
social-cultural memory operating via the institutional actuation,
establishment and recognition of the Otherness (or Alterity) and its related
(more or less individualistic) constructs, meant according to (Meadian)
symbolic interactionism. On the other hand, this last sociological trend
cannot be fully neglected because otherwise, from an anthropological
standpoint, those observed cultural diversities among various peoples and
societies (even present at a local level) might not be explained except
referring to genetic differences and racist motivations which does not have
any scientific basis.

To summing up, therefore, we think that Otherness (or Alterity) with
its related (more or less individualistic) constructs and, of (Meadian)
symbolic interactionism, together with its various psychoanalytic features
as provided by the last Freudian framework, may be usefully employed to
try to formally explain modernization-demodernization phenomena.
Moreover, the case studies mentioned above, above all that provided by
Minakov’s investigation, show too what role may play the past institutional
history in the current institutional setting, its structure and functioning,
which might be explained only making reference to certain unconscious
constructs, as recalled above (Super-Ego and Otherness), which are the
humus for the various automatisms and recurrences of the past; postcolonial
studies support too these arguments. From these specific case studies, it
seems that the history of past general institutions (or collective social-
cultural history) has a great influence (just unconsciously, mainly through )
on the present state, structure and development of the current institutions, social-cultural orders and their functioning, in certain cases (as those seen above) hindering modernization processes, or social changes, when suitable and functional norms or other juridical tools and means, have not been planned to face and adequately reify it and its irruption, as for Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1997), according to whom the reality, meant as the set of all external things which lie outside our own voluntary control, is due to the interrelationships with the other, and does not exist without this latter. Such a reality is independent of us, is invisible, is intersubjectively shared by all individuals through language (the most important symbolic system) and sign systems, and is immediately manifested and showed by the interactions with the other, above all through the so-called common sense. According to Berger and Luckmann, in order to an institution there exists, two main conditions have to occur, namely, that it has either an historical development and schemata of behaviours (conventions and typings) and patterns of actions; they hold thanks to cultural memory (Assmann, 1997) and different symbolic systems historically built up and in reciprocal interaction among them, ruled and ordered by certain norm systems. According to Berger and Luckmann, a generic institution arises from the “crystallization” of customs, habits, typings and practices, in certain collectivities or social groups (see also Bourdieu habitus), which have proper historical routes providing patterns of behaviours and attitudes. This typical process of institutionalization is the basis for any further form of social relation. Once established this, an institution undertakes an objective status as historically created and inherited by humans through symbolic systems, and playing the role of
reciprocal integration within society; in turn, humans are moulded by these institutions (*homo socius*) just according to symbolic interactionism, while such symbolic systems become meaningful through systems of collective legitimation. In any case, the variation of the Otherness is closely related with the *social change* which, in turn, is based on *social reproduction* processes which are like those biological processes guarantying the life maintenance of a living organism, without which it is destined to die, so that also a given society, to remain in life, must undergo to these social reproduction processes ruling social change according to those modalities and aims politically prevailing at a given moment (Gallino, 2006). As each human individual has an her or his own (personal) unconscious ruling her or his life, so any society has an its own (collective) unconscious ruling its life (Barel, 1974; Robertson, 1991).

In conclusion, we may say that history plays a very crucial and fundamental role in sociology and politics and their phenomenology. The theoretical pattern we have outlined here, in regard to an attempt to formalize modernization/demodernization phenomena, and mainly worked out within (Meadian) symbolic interactionism, has highlighted this role, standing out the primary intervention of unconscious mechanisms in the occurrence and settlement of the present state of a society. As emblematic cases, just the current studies and researchers on post-Soviet transitions are liable to be pursued along this way.

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UKRAINE’S EUROPEAN CHOICE AS A SOCIAL CONDITION OF DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

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Abstract. The Euromaidan events in Ukraine actualized discussion on the possibility of the country’s democratic transition. In this article, we demonstrate that mutually exclusive geopolitical orientations of the population in Ukraine are conditioned by different values and cultural identities. Using logistic regression, we have found that the geopolitical split in Ukrainian society is caused not only by regional and ethnolinguistic differences. Support for the course of Eurointegration has become possible, owing to combining national identity (including preservation of the status of the Ukrainian language as a single state language) with democratic and market values. Support for rapprochement with Russia, on the other hand, corresponds to the domination of Russian ethnic identity, support for an official status for the Russian
language, negative attitudes toward a multiparty system, and support for planned economy.

**Keywords:** geopolitical orientations; European choice; values; transition; Ukraine
Introduction

Several years have passed since the events of the Revolution of Dignity (Euromaidan) in Ukraine. The example of people’s willingness to stand for their geopolitical choice at the cost of their lives has already faded, because of the aggressive actions of Russia – annexation of Crimea and the war incited in Donbass. The development of democracy and capitalism in post-Soviet countries has become one of the most pressing problems with the renewal of Cold War manifestations. If the Baltic countries have rather successfully passed the process of transition, the remaining countries that are geographically related to the European continent – Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan – move differently along the path of modernization. Russia’s interference in the domestic affairs of these countries—since it considers their territories as the space of Russia’s vital interests—has pushed to the foreground post-Soviet societies’ geopolitical choice between the Euro-Atlantic space and Eurasia. The attempts of these countries to make radical transformations were met by the hostile resistance of Russia, which restrains the Westward course of these countries with the help of direct aggression or the support of separatist enclaves. The irreversibility of modernization reforms in these countries threatens Putin’s authoritarian regime and the imperial essence of Russia itself.

In this regard, the attention of researchers is focused on the political and economic values of those post-Soviet countries that border different cultural spaces. However, an important aspect in the study of transition countries is the problem of geopolitical orientations and their alignment
with modernization values. Moreover, the nature of these orientations is associated with the prospect for formation of national identities. The movement toward integration with Europe has provided the development of new national identities, while the reproduction of the Russian integration project would have graded these identities and be revived imperial identity.

There are superficial stereotypes about Ukraine as a country with regional and linguistic divisions that serve as the main determinants of geopolitical orientations. We hypothesize that the geopolitical orientations of Ukrainians are determined not only by traditional socio-cultural divisions, but also by political and economic values. Using Ukraine as an example, we demonstrate in our article that the approach to transition becomes efficient, if the foundational values of geopolitical orientations in those societies which have a historical bent toward the European cultural space are analyzed scrupulously. A comparison of the factors of geopolitical orientations amongst Ukrainians is important for understanding the prospects for further democratic transition in Eastern Europe, which has become an arena of struggle not only for foreign-policy preferences, but also for two competing value systems.

**Theoretical framework**

The problematic character of the “classical” transitology approach consisted in the fact that it prioritized the procedural aspect of the transition from authoritarianism to democracy (Rustow, 1967; O'Donnell, Schmitter, 1986). After the fall of the Berlin wall, the development of
events in the countries of the “second world” gave additional grounds for considering the methodological aspects of the new scientific trend of transitology; it allowed for system analysis to be performed in the search for the determinants and factors of modernization amongst post-communist countries. The study of the political reforms involved in the transition to consolidated democracy was the field of research for transitology. However, the transition differences amongst post-communist countries have testified to the scantiness of the transitology approach and raised the question of whether it is possible, in general, to use knowledge of “East-European exclusiveness” of transition when analyzing given processes (Schmitter, Karl, 1994; Bunce, 2000). The problem became that the processes of transition from communist authoritarianism to democracy were very different and more complicated than transitions from “ordinary” bureaucratic authoritarianism to democracy. The ambiguity of democratic transition in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Soviet successor states convinced researchers to revise some aspects of transitology and conclude that there are many paths that a society may take after the collapse of an authoritarian system (Carothers, 2002). The present reality of democratic condition in Turkey and the countries of Latin America have forced researchers to return to socio-cultural bases of democratic transition. Researchers now try to embrace both institutional and value dimensions in disclosing the reasons for successful or unsuccessful social transitions (Inglehart, Welzel, 2005; North, Wallis, Weingast, 2009).
However, the value component still has not acquired a central place in the research of democratic transition. The reason for this may be the successful democratic transition of the countries of Central-Eastern Europe and the Baltic area; their experience was compared with other post-Communist countries that had delayed democratic development. In connection to this, there appeared a caution to transitology: its studies had been developed as based on the research of ethnically homogeneous societies and thus could not serve as the basis of transition analysis under conditions of ethnic diversity and unsolved problems of national identity (Roeder, 1999). The methodological basis of this caution was to be found in an interpretation of the words of D. Rustow, who founded the transitology approach and noted that the social unification should precede the process of democratization (Rustow, 1967: 120-132). Unification is, first of all, considered to mean ethnic homogeneity. Examples of successful transition in the countries of Central Europe confirmed this peculiarity. After World War II, Poland and Hungary lost part of their territories but, nonetheless, acquired a strong national identity. That is, the ethnocultural homogeneity of these societies was a favorable factor. Through the removal of obstacles in the way of transition, Czechoslovakia was divided into two ethnically homogeneous countries. A short-term blockade of the Baltic countries by Moscow, as well as the latter’s armed attempts to seize power in January 1991 in Vilnius and Riga, further consolidated nationalist feelings in these societies’ strivings to leave the USSR. In Baltic countries, ethnic minorities were limited by the policy of refusing citizenship for non-native persons who settled there after the Soviet occupation (Barrington, 1995; Park, 1994; Kolstø and Tsilevich, 1997). Those people still reside in Latvia and feel
marginalized. They identify themselves as “Russians” rather than as citizens of the political community of their country (Duvold, Berglund, 2014). Now, when the Kremlin has used Russian minorities in post-Soviet countries in hybrid wars, non-Russian citizens look at them with fear as at “the fifth column” of the Kremlin and potential soldiers of the hybrid war against the citizens of Baltic countries. During the time shortly after the collapse of the USSR, the policy of restricting the civil rights of minorities allowed for the performance of radical economic and political transformations. The weakening of Russia in the 1990s allowed the governments of Baltic countries to ignore the displeasure of Russia and join NATO and the EU. Thus, even artificially created institutional homogeneity allowed these post-communist countries to move toward democracy via European integration.

Transition has been most complicated for such countries as Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and Georgia, since they were little involved historically in the social space through which passed modernization and the rationalization of consciousness. On top of the unformed political nation and low levels of political participation in newly created countries, economic difficulties and abuses in the course of privatization of public property were superimposed. In addition, the democratic transition in post-Soviet territories faced an influential obstacle – Putin’s Russia, which had gradually turned to the support of authoritarianism, became a kind of gendarme in the post-Soviet space. Even in the time of Gorbachov and Yeltsin, the Kremlin participated in the creation of a series of ethnopolitical conflicts in neighboring Soviet republics; Moscow agreed to resolve the
conflicts in exchange for geopolitical loyalty. The transitology approach to post-Soviet transformations was untimely, since it was erroneous to compare the transition in Eastern-Central Europe with social transformations in the countries of the former Soviet Union. In addition to a transition to democracy and market economy, and a strengthening of sovereignty, these countries had to create nations (Kuzio, 2001). In this context, Kuzio saw national identity and nationalism as central elements for studying the successful democratic transition of post-Soviet countries (Kuzio, 2010).

From the reasons stated above, some researchers pointed to the problem of national identity in relation to Ukraine’s development, where regional and ethnocultural delimitations had become the main obstacle to democratic transition and formation of market economy (Shulman, 2005; Shulman, 2006; Hansen, Hesli, 2009; Kuzio, 2010; Constant, Kahanec, Zimmermann, 2011; Constant, Kahanec, Zimmermann, 2012). Ukraine’s adherence to European development, democratic values and maintenance of market economy were supported, to a large extent, by residents of the Western and Central regions, who were ethnic Ukrainians, Ukrainian-speaking people, and those who identified themselves as citizens of Ukraine. On the other hand, adherence to union with Russia (Eurasian orientations), and antidemocratic, antimarket sentiments were spread largely among residents of the Eastern and Southern regions, who were ethnic Russians, Russian-speaking people, and those who did not identify themselves as citizens of Ukraine. The problem of language (and the status of the Russian language, in particular) has also become a key factor of
foreign-policy orientations. Advocates of raising the status of the Russian language hold to pro-Russian orientations, and the opponents of this step mostly support European integration (Zalizniak, 2009; Olszanski, 2012).

At the same time, it was evident that a number of post-Soviet countries (for example Russia and Belarus), while relatively homogenous in ethnic and cultural terms, lack the formation of political nationhood, competitive market economy, and free democracy—i.e., ethnic homogeneity and national unity are not always a sufficient condition for transition. The success of transition in post-socialist Central-European and Baltic countries related to a long-term historical belonging to European culture. Their transitions were reflected in mass consciousness as a return to the habitual, sustainable social order based on democratic and market values (Cichowski, 2000; Szczerbiak, 2016). Thed weakening of the USSR and newly-created Russian Federation allowed these countries to avoid looking back to the East and move daringly to the West. The objective of joining the EU urged these countries to reform and inspired them to overcome economic difficulties (Tucker, Pacek, Berinsky, 2002; Mansfeldová, Sparschuh, Wenninger, 2005; Schimmelfennig, Sedelmeier, 2005; Kollmorgen, 2013). In this sense, geopolitical orientations are a key aggregator of important social values for democratic transition. Geopolitical orientations in this case can be interpreted as “geopolitical vision” which G. Dijkink defined as: “any idea concerning the relation between one’s place and other places, involving feelings of (in)security or (dis)advantage (and/or) invoking ideas about a collective mission or foreign policy strategy” (Dijkink, 1996, p. 11). In some cases, geopolitical orientation may be vague or ambivalent.
However, when there is an existential threat to national identity, geopolitical orientations combine with the values that are appropriate to the object of these orientations.

**European integration as a new framework for post-communist transition in Eastern Europe**

Regardless of regional and ethnocultural splits, the absence of a perception of values in the democratic transition was a problem for Ukraine, rather than the absence of a homogeneous society. The Orange Revolution of 2004 changed the administrative scenario of presidential election in Ukraine, and the combination of regional and ethnolinguistic identities with pro-European aspirations favored the mobilization of active groups during this time. However, both the protest participants and the rest of the population were not distinguished by any particular adherence to democratic and market values (Lane, 2008; Beissinger, 2013). The Ukrainian population's increase in anti-market sentiments and negative attitude toward the idea of joining NATO, as well as the intensive formation of a mass consciousness oriented toward the Eastern geopolitical vector, became negative tendencies in the mid-2000s (Golovakha, Panina, 2006).

Simultaneously, a process of substituting the traditional set of ethnocultural identities with a value-rational comprehension of the advantages of democracy and market economy occurred among the active part of Ukrainian society. The European integration of Ukraine represented these advantages, and Ukrainians European structures as a certain check on corrupt political elites. Moreover, European and Eurasian modes of
Ukrainian development became clearly differentiated in the public consciousness on the eve of the dramatic events of Euromaidan and especially after Russia’s aggression. The monitoring results of the Institute of Sociology at NAS of Ukraine demonstrate that the number of ambivalent supporters of the both modes of development in the first half of the 2000s reached above a quarter of adult population (see Table 1). A considerable decrease began even before the Euromaidan events. A summer 2013 survey observed a two-fold decrease in the number of ambivalent opinions, as compared to previous years. Starting in 2014, the number of ambivalent opinions became minor.

Table 1. Dynamics of ambivalent attitudes toward Ukraine’s geopolitical orientation (simultaneous positive attitude toward European and Eurasian integration of Ukraine)

<table>
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<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>1807</td>
<td>1797</td>
<td>1786</td>
<td>1785</td>
<td>1788</td>
<td>1797</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>1795</td>
<td>1795</td>
<td>1792</td>
<td>1794</td>
<td>1784</td>
<td>1782</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The sociological monitoring of the Institute of Sociology, NAS of Ukraine, authors’ own analysis

The dramatic events of citizen activization in Ukraine during the winter of 2013-2014 were caused by the government’s refusal to sign the Association Agreement with the EU. The Revolution of Dignity became the
first revolutionary protest in the post-Soviet space that was not directly connected with elections but with democratic aspirations. This is evidenced by a comparison of determinants of participation in two revolutions in Ukraine. The common factors of both protests were microregional splits and the population’s concern with foreign-policy priorities. However, in determining participation in the Orange Revolution, these factors were combined with those of language identification, as well as age and status differentiation. By contrast, participation in the Revolution of Dignity was also conditioned by support for democratic and market values (Reznik, 2016). The perception of external threat and new hopes of citizens favored the formation of a national consensus as to the key political problems. The war triggered a spike in civil national pride and the sense of national belonging; support for Ukraine's joining the EU and NATO increased, while support for integration with Russia decreased (Alexseev, 2015). The geography of the expansion of Ukrainian identity spread everywhere in the Eastern and Southern regions, except for Donbass, where considerable pro-Russian orientations were observed even in the territories controlled by Ukraine. But changes have occurred even in these territories: Eurasian orientations have decreased and European ones increased (Dembitskyi, 2015).

Thus, a characteristic feature of Ukraine consists in the existence of historically determined orientations toward the West and toward Russia, as intertwined with Ukrainian and Russian identities. Geopolitical orientations themselves cannot be the basis of democratic transition without corresponding political and economic values which favor social
modernization. Thus, the successful democratic transition of Eastern European countries needs a geopolitical objective that includes democratic and market orientations as being important for the transition. Key problems of Ukraine’s democratic transition are not the traditional regional and ethnocultural limitations, but the differently directed geopolitical aspirations that are also based on important political and economic values.

Thus, our hypothesis is as follows.

Hypothesis: Differences between the adherents of European and Eurasian modes of Ukrainian development consist not only in the regional and ethnolinguistic limitations, but also in the conception of political and economic values. The proponents of a European course for Ukraine are disposed, to a greater extent, to democratic values and market economy than the proponents of a Eurasian course.

Date and Method

Our analysis is based on a national survey of Ukraine’s population, which was conducted from June-July 2016 by the Institute of Sociology at the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) of Ukraine, in collaboration with the Charity fund Intellectual. The survey was conducted according to quota sampling that represented the adult (ages 18+) population of Ukraine. The survey also was conducted in all regions of Ukraine (except for The Autonomous Republic of the Crimea annexed by Russia and the occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk Regions), and by way of personal interviews conducted at respondents’ places of residence. In total, 1,802
persons were questioned. The sampling error does not exceed 2.3%. Sampling was three-tiered: stratified, random, and quota screening. In the first stage, places of residence were selected (where surveys were conducted according to geographical region). In the second stage, specific postal addresses were chosen (at convenient highway routes and/or crossroads). In the third, respondents were chosen. The quota screening of respondents in the final stage allowed for proportions to be maintained with regard to every oblast (region), size of settlement (city, town, village), sex, age, and education level typical of each region and for that type of settlement.

To reveal the factors of participation in protests, binary logistic regression was used. Binary logistic regression allowed for analysis of the effect of factors on dichotomous dependent variables. In the survey, researchers used a dichotomous variable for the answer to the questions/dependent variables “What is your attitude toward the idea of joining the union with Russia and Belarus?” and “What is your attitude toward the idea of joining the European Union?” (see Table 2). In both cases, the variables take the value either of 1 for those who gave a positive answer about these ideas, or 0 for the group of those who gave a negative or uncertain answers. It should be noted that only 2.6% of respondents showed ambivalent views or simultaneously supported both.
**Table 2.** Distribution of answers to the question “What is your attitude toward...?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The idea of joining the union with Russia and Belarus</th>
<th>The idea of joining the European Union</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More negative</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>1032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to say</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More positive</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The factors pointed out in the survey as independent variables are as follows: (1) macroregional division (west/center vs. south/east); (2) ethnic identity; (3) native language; (4) national identity; (5) attitude toward the status of the Russian language; (6) attitude toward democracy as political system; (7) support for a multiparty political system; (8) support for a planned economy; and (9) positive attitude toward the privatization of large enterprises. *Table 3* contains descriptive statistics of the independent variables used in the social survey.
### Table 3. Descriptive statistics for analytical samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Region</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>572</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnic identity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
<td>1603</td>
<td>89.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Native language</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
<td>1274</td>
<td>70.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Whom do you most consider yourself as...?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village/city inhabitant</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident of some region</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Do you believe that the Russian language in Ukraine should gain official language status?

- No: 1001 (55.6)
- Difficult to say: 254 (14.1)
- Yes: 546 (30.3)

Democracy is the best political system for any modern state

- Completely disagree: 39 (2.2)
- Somewhat disagree: 161 (8.9)
- Difficult to say agree or disagree: 365 (20.3)
- Somewhat agree: 667 (37.0)
- Completely agree: 569 (31.6)

In your opinion, does Ukraine need a multi-party system?

- No: 804 (44.7)
- Difficult to answer: 508 (28.3)
- Yes: 485 (27.0)

What do you think is the government’s role in regulating the economy?

- The government’s role must be minimized – the market regulates everything: 207 (11.5)
- Government control should be combined with market practices: 927 (51.4)
- A return to a planned economy with complete government control is a necessity: 465 (25.8)
Indicators of ethnic identity, native language, national identity, attitude toward the status of the Russian language, support for a multi-party political system, support for a planned economy, and attitude toward the privatization of large enterprises were converted into fictitious dichotomous variables. The processing and statistical analysis of the data were performed using the program package SPSS.

Results

The construction of equations for binary logistic regression to examine the influence of various factors on dependent dichotomous variables of geopolitical orientations allowed for the discovery of the value-based differences between foreign policy priorities (see Table 4).
### Table 4. Determinants of geopolitical choice, logistic regressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Determinant</th>
<th>The idea of joining the union with Russia and Belarus</th>
<th>The idea of joining the European Union</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Macropatial division (1 = West/Center; 0 = South/East)</td>
<td>-.766***</td>
<td>1.058***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.465)</td>
<td>(2.882)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic identity (1 = Ukrainian; 0 = Russian/Other)</td>
<td>-.660***</td>
<td>.363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.517)</td>
<td>(1.437)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claims Ukrainian as native language (0/1)</td>
<td>-.023</td>
<td>.061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.978)</td>
<td>(1.063)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifies primarily as citizen of Ukraine (0/1)</td>
<td>-.399**</td>
<td>.422***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.671)</td>
<td>(1.526)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian language should gain official status (0/1)</td>
<td>1.909***</td>
<td>-1.029***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6.748)</td>
<td>(3.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy is the best political system for any modern states (1–5)</td>
<td>-.109</td>
<td>.352***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.115)</td>
<td>(.703)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine needs a multi-party system (0/1)</td>
<td>-.434**</td>
<td>.700***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.648)</td>
<td>(2.013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A return to a planned economy with complete government control is a necessity (0/1)</td>
<td>.483***</td>
<td>-.277*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.621)</td>
<td>(.758)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive attitude toward the privatization of large enterprises (0/1)</td>
<td>-.270</td>
<td>1.143***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.763)</td>
<td>(3.136)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-.964</td>
<td>-.575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.382)</td>
<td>(.563)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagelkerke R Square</td>
<td>.364</td>
<td>.313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>865</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note: Entries are B-coefficients with odds ratio (the exponentiation of the B-coefficients) in parentheses.

\*p ≤ .05. \*\*p ≤ .01. \*\*\*p ≤ .001

Analysis of the coefficients of the set of equations demonstrates that the influential determinants of support for Ukraine’s joining the union with Russia and Belarus were as follows: macroregional division (residents of the South and East of Ukraine prevailed); ethnic identity (predominantly those who reported their ethnic identity as Russian and other); support for official status for the Russian language; support for a planned economy. National identity (those who did not identify primarily as citizen of Ukraine) and disapproval of a multiparty system showed a somewhat smaller impact. However, native language, attitude toward a democratic political system and attitude toward the privatization of large enterprises had no effect on the dependent variable.

The analysis of coefficients of the set of equations demonstrates that the influential determinants of support for Ukraine’s membership in the EU were as follows: macroregional division (residents of the West and Center of Ukraine prevailed); national identity (those who identified primarily as citizens of Ukraine); negative attitude toward official status for the Russian language; confirmation of the supremacy of the democratic political system; support for a multiparty system; and positive attitude toward the privatization of large enterprises. Disapproval of a planned economy showed a somewhat smaller impact.
Thus, our hypothesis is confirmed as a whole. Adherence to different foreign-policy priorities in Ukraine's development involves distinct, reflexive determinants, which follow indicators such as macroregional division, national identity, attitude toward the status of the Russian language, attitude toward a multiparty system, and support for a planned economy. Moreover, European orientations are determined distinctly by the value factors of support for democracy and privatization of big enterprises, while, Eurasian orientations are determined by ethnic identity and in contrast to pro-European orientations.

Conclusions

Our assumptions about the value differences between supporters of European and Eurasian modes of Ukraine's development were confirmed. A distinct connection between the European aspirations of Ukrainians and democratic values proves the sincerity of the European choice. It also shows that it is not just a pragmatic desire to enjoy the economic welfare of a political space that is more successful in economic and social contexts. However, concerning pro-European respondents, assumptions about the differences between supporters of geopolitical orientation on ethnolinguistic grounds are not justified. European orientations are not determined by ethnic identity and native language. Such differentiation shows that European orientations have gotten rid of ethnolinguistic character. In any case, the absence of the effect of ethnolinguistic factors and the availability of value factors of pro-European orientations signal the rationalization of these respondents' aspirations.
However, there exists a considerable part of Ukrainian society that is oriented toward Russia, advocating for the opposite political and economic values, and displaying their ethnic rather than national identity; this calls into question the thesis of the irreversibility of democratic transition. Eurasian orientations are attached distinctly to ethnic identity. The existence of such complex identity-based splits inevitably decelerates democratic transition. This is also connected with the fact that the geopolitical orientations of Ukraine's population preserve a national feature that necessarily will be used by the Kremlin with the aid of hybrid warfare. And only the unraveling of such identities will sustain the prospects for successful democratic transition.

The problem of giving the Russian language official-language status in Ukraine is also an important condition of the democratic transition. On the one hand, the Russian language preserves its powerful potential, owing to tradition, the considerable number of native Russian speakers in the country, and the rapid development of digital mass media; on the other hand, the future of the Ukrainian language possessing the status of official language also looks promising, since speaking Ukrainian proficiently has a positive effect on the capacity to perform professional duties within state or civic activities. All that is favorable to raising the status of the Ukrainian language and preserving a certain language balance, thus, contributes to stability. A shift in this balance toward increasing the status of the Russian language causes resistance from the active part of the society, due to their Ukrainian and pro-European identity. As it was in the case of Baltic countries, where Russian minorities were politically marginalized, language
policy is a key factor for the successful democratic transition of Ukraine. Finally, Ukraine’s successful integration with its Euro-Atlantic surroundings would see an expected decrease in pro-Russian geopolitical orientations and favor the strengthening of Ukrainian identity.

Despite disappointment at the rate of Ukraine’s European integration, the European orientations of Ukrainians remain the only ideologeme fit for democratic transition. Ukraine’s problem is that it has to pass the way of assimilating the values of modern Europe (capitalism, civil society, rationalization of public relations). However, Europe at present is spreading post-modern values that are untimely and often unclear to Ukrainians, who can be disposed to authoritarianism and incited against the market. The latter is evidenced by Ukrainian attitudes toward the existence of multiparty system and the privatization of big enterprises. The question here is the insufficient legitimacy of the institution of private property in Ukrainian society, which is caused by the population’s perception of the privatization of industry and land as dishonest, unfair, and having given birth to the oligarchic system of a corrupt economy. Further, the long-term practice of the financial maintenance of political parties by oligarchs also has reflected on the attitudes of Ukrainians toward a multiparty system. Still, a distinct connection between the European aspirations of Ukrainians and democratic values proves the sincerity of the European choice. It also shows that this choice is not just a pragmatic desire to enjoy the economic welfare of a more socioeconomically successful political space.

The study of the factors of geopolitical orientations in Ukraine gives us an opportunity to understand the course of democratic transition in the
post-Soviet countries of Eastern Europe. The results of this research demonstrate the conditions under which the geopolitical orientations of the population (in this case, those that have been formed in Ukraine after the Revolution of Dignity) can be counted as facilitating the possibility of democratic transition.
Bibliography


