Transition in post-USSR Europe:
The Human Factor in Political Identity Formation

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This interdisciplinary dissertation seeks a more holistic and broader understanding of political identity formation processes in post-USSR Eastern Europe. It seeks to develop a theoretical approach for assessing the non-rationalistic factors, which influence domestic and foreign policy, political attitudes and identities in the region – including associative symbolism, human experience, political images and historical narratives.

The research is based on the main case of Lithuania, which is analysed in the first three chapters of the dissertation from three perspectives: the historical/political, the intellectual/narrative and the experiential/symbolic. Along the way, a theory is being inductively elaborated, offering new insights into the process of Lithuanian political identity formation. In the next two chapters, other cases are also explored in order to examine the theory's applicability and broaden its spectrum of inquiry. These include Russia, Poland, Estonia and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

Qualitative methods are used in this dissertation, including textual and visual analysis (of primary and secondary literary sources, photographs, film, etc.), unstructured interviews, historical analysis, as well as political, philosophical and anthropological theoretical approaches by Roland Barthes, Raoul Girardet, Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, Victor Turner, Arpad Szakolczai, and others.

The dissertation seeks to improve our understanding of political identity formation, periods of political transition and the importance of human experience to politics. It also aims at developing a theory capable of accounting for the often unrecognised factors of historical narrative, political symbolism and emotional associative charge. As a result it makes a contribution towards a better understanding of post-USSR Eastern European politics and thus to more effective policy towards the region, which is gaining increasing importance in global political arena.

Word count: 93.678

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CHAPTER 1. The human factor in post-USSR politics

1.1 Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union was one of the most important events in the second half of the twentieth century. Even nowadays the situation in the post-USSR region poses fundamental questions about the issue of identity in relation to politics. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the newly formed and re-established states embarked on a process of rediscovering themselves and their role in a new, post-bipolar world. They had to perceive, re-establish or even re-invent their political identities and chart their new trajectories. Some of them started their journey 'back to Europe', such as the countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltic States. Others either embarked on their own identity-based political projects, or isolated themselves, or else maintained strong ties with Russia – or all at once (such as Belarus and to a lesser extent Ukraine until 2014). No matter the diversity of the paths, there are also many commonalities between post-USSR countries, as they all had to deal with same general problems: the rapid political change, their communist past, the experience of transition as well as various new challenges posed by late modernity.[1]

Some of the common issues that these countries faced were technical ones, such as transitions from socialism to democracy, from state-regulated market to capitalism, from cultural repression to freedom of speech. All of the new countries had to cope with these often very difficult changes. However, what is frequently forgotten in the political discussion, in large part due to the unquantifiable nature of the matter, is the dimension of human experience in these processes. Indeed, what we call 'political' does not only consist of statistics, legal issues and economic variables. It was not the countries *per se* that had to withstand the transitions. Above all, it was the people who lived through these changes. Perhaps the main commonality between all of the post-Soviet countries is the human experience of profound change in the lives of citizens and peoples (including minorities that do not have citizenship). And it is this experiential level of human life – the experience of change and selfhood that holds the keys to a better understanding of political identity formation as well as many paradoxes related.

In the post-Soviet space, people – both individually and collectively – in many ways had to redefine the answer to a set of fundamental questions about themselves, their affiliations

[1] This dissertation will use two interrelated, yet distinct terms: *post-Soviet* and *post-USSR*. The latter, which will be used most frequently, will have a technical meaning and signify the historical space and time in the Eastern and Central Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The first one, however, will have a phenomenological flavour, marking the space and epoch, the *Lebenswelt* that has experientially moved beyond what will be called Soviet existence. Chapter five develops this theme in some detail.

and their origins. This dissertation will explore these human experiences and considerations in search for a better articulation of *how is political identity actually formed.* This feeds into a broader array of questions: How is political identity perceived and defined? What shapes the processes of identity formation and what is the role of transition in the process? How do the formal level (national representations, academic literature on the topic etc.) and the informal level (popular opinions about 'Lithuanian-ness' expressed in contemporary art, subcultures, the internet and other spheres) interact in the process? Crucially, how do contemporary post-USSR people understand and perceive the 'being' of political reality, of themselves and of their country? What methods, what rationale do they use, when addressing the question of "what/who am I"? What strands of ideas had influenced such perceptions and what dangers lurk within this process of change and transformation?

This research is interdisciplinary in nature. It is a comparative analysis of post-Soviet identity formation, based on, but not limited to, the main case of Lithuania, exploring identity from the perspective of human experience. The dissertation will therefore draw on various approaches in anthropology, history, philosophy and cultural studies and examine the potential of concepts such as *liminality*, *social imaginary*, *mask-identity* and others to enquire into people's experience as a source of political practice and identity formation. The objective of this project is threefold. It seeks to explore the ways in which identity is constructed and perceived, primarily in Lithuania, and to establish new means of understanding the process. It also aims to test different elements of the approach developed while engaging with the case of Lithuania to other instances within the post-USSR space, such as Ukraine, Russia and others in order to establishthe applicability and expand the range of inquiry. However, this research will not seek to develop, construct or select the appropriate identity of different countries, but will rather try to understand the tendencies and variation in the process of political identity formation as such. Finally, it seeks to relate the issue of identity formation in post-Soviet transition to wider political and philosophical questions of being, truth and authenticity and to present a critical analysis of the processes from the perspective of political anthropology.

The fundamental goal of this research is to develop a new approach towards identity perception. It will seek to outline an alternative to positivist objectivism and 'post-modern' relativism. Drawing upon the Platonic tradition of thinking, as well as the hermeneutic philosophical tradition, I will argue that there are complex ontological links between politics, ethics and aesthetics, between shape and meaning as well as between worth and action that can constitute new ways of thinking not only about the post-Soviet region (even

though the scope of this dissertation will limit itself with a European and traditionally Christian part of the region), but also about identity and politics in general.

The main case of Lithuania as well as the theme of political identity formation and transition in post-USSR Eastern Europe are the focus of this research for several reasons. First of all, the collapse of the Soviet Union can arguably be seen as one of the most important global transitional events after the Second World War, in different ways influencing political events even nowadays. Secondly, the union split into multiple states: some of which, such as Lithuania, were occupied by the Soviets during the Second World War, whereas others joined the union willingly and yet others were part of the Russian Empire before the Bolshevik revolution. No matter the previous history, all of the new states had to face the challenge of political transition. They had to *become* separate, autonomous, sovereign political units – to redefine themselves. Understanding this process of becoming and of formation can lead to better appreciation of various political and cultural issues, from "far-right" movements in the region to the role of identity to the relation between the political and the existential. Finally, Lithuania, as the main case of focus was chosen because, as I will suggest, it is both a characteristic and an exceptional case.

It is characteristic because likethe Asian and other Baltic post-Soviet states, as well as Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova, and unlike Central and South-Eastern European countries, it was part of the actual USSR.[2] At the same time it is exceptional, because it is one of only three post-Soviet states (along with Latvia and Estonia), including Russia itself, to have previous historical experience of modern statehood during the interwar years, and therefore a modern national imaginary preceding Soviet times, which allows for a more in-depth historical analysis.

Secondly, Lithuania shares the medieval historically-related identity narrative of Grand Duchy of Lithuania and *Rzeczpospolita* with Belarus, Ukraine, Poland and partially with other Baltic States and Moldova. Apart from Poland, however, it is the main claimant of this historical past as part of its national political heritage, reinforced by the very name of the state.[3] Poland, on the other hand, did not belong to the Soviet Union and maintained its

[2] The difference between the Soviet states and the satellite socialist block was extensive, spanning from political and economic to cultural and existential conditions in a broader sense. The Soviet states were under much more thorough control from Kremlin and people there lived under much harsher conditions of the 'socialist paradise'. In fact, the Baltic States were considered the 'West' (in terms of high life standards) Union wide and, analogically, the Central European socialist states were seen as 'West' by the Baltic people.
[3] Recently the Belarussian nationalist narrative has also started actively claiming the 'rights of ownership' to this shared historical tradition of political identity.

nominal unity throughout the twentieth century, whilst Lithuania had to establish itself anew, nearly from scratch.

Finally, Lithuania is a particularly interesting case because not only was it the first state to declare independence from the Soviet Union, but it also is the only ethnically and linguistically homogeneous Baltic state in post-Soviet Europe, which is otherwise dominated by Slavs.[4] This allows for researching a relatively homogenous national historical (as opposed to the more contested ones, such as in Ukraine), cultural and political narrative, which provides a less complex case for developing a theory. As will be demonstrated, the cultural and linguistic element is exceptionally important in understanding the post-Soviet identity-related politics. It is therefore this richness of historical and cultural background that makes Lithuania representative in any post-Soviet context, yet exceptional and multi-faceted enough as an individual case for studying the formation of not only post-Soviet, but also earlier, modern political identity formation.[5]

1.2 Literature review

This interdisciplinary research draws on work in the fields of politics, philosophy, anthropology, and history. This section will critically analyse the existing literature related to political identity formation in the main case of Lithuania as well as the other post-USSR Eastern European states and indicate the existing gaps, positioning this dissertation accordingly. This is not a traditional case study, however, as the study and comparison is conducted in order to illustrate and substantiate the new theoretical approach that this work proposes rather than to pursue an analysis of a particular case as an end in itself.

Lithuania's post-Soviet identity in question

Literature on identity formation in Lithuania is wide-ranging and cuts across various disciplines. Since the early 1990s, the topic has generated much research in a variety of different fields in the humanities and social sciences. Two Lithuanian institutions that periodically do research in the field are the Institute of Cultural Research and the Institute of Social Sciences. Apart from those, there are numerous publications on the topic by Lithuanian universities (especially Vytautas Magnus University, Vilnius University, Klaipėda University, Vilnius Pedagogical University, Šiauliai University). The Lithuanian

[4] Another state where the majority of the population is Baltic is Latvia, yet the percentage of Latvians in Latvia is approximately 62%, compared with 84% of Lithuanians in Lithuania.

[5] In the dissertation it will be argued that there is a difference between the pre-modern and modern political identity, the former organically and gradually emerging from the traditional world perception, and the latter being a much faster, partially romanticist and partially rationalist project of the 'enlightened' mind.

academic discussions on identity can be grouped into three major clusters, which could perhaps be partially related to Lithuania's historical past, its present and its future: a) issues of Lithuanian identity in relation to perceived tradition and history;[6] b) the impact of the Soviet regime on post-Soviet Lithuanian identity;[7] c) Lithuanian identity-related issues in relation to the EU.[8] These themes are intertwined and often discussed all together, and they emerge as key elements of the contemporary identity-related discussions.

Lithuanian historical narrative has a far-reaching memory, and through different interpretations it is being used to articulate different models of political identity. The predominant and nearly uncontested presumption in Lithuanian historiography states that there is a real and unbroken cultural and historical link uniting the medieval Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL), the interwar Lithuanian Republic, and the post-Soviet Lithuanian Republic.[9] The main elements that hold together these historical episodes as key parts of the Lithuanian heritage are the ethno-linguistic Lithuanian nation and its territory. Some argue that Lithuanians are historically affiliated to the Western civilisation and that, despite the Soviet intervention, it is a natural part of the West.[10] Another strand projects a more 'separatist' historical vision of Lithuania, emphasizing Lithuania's pagan tradition and, in

[6]Marijona Barkauskaitė, ed., *Tautiškumas Ir Pilietiškas: Atskirtis Ar Demė?* [Nationhood and Citizenship: Division or Concord?] (Vilnius: Vilnius Pedagogical University Press, 2007); Tomas Balkelis, *The Making of Modern Lithuania* (London: Routledge, 2009); Alfredas Bumblauskas, "Lithuania: An Old State in New Forms: What Makes Us what we Are," *Lithuania in the World* 13, no. 6 (2005), 12-25; Alfredas Bumblauskas and Ramūnas Lopata, eds., *Lietuvos Tauta: Būklė Ir Raidos Perspektyvos* [Lithuanian Nation: Condition and Development Perspectives] (Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2007); Alfredas Bumblauskas and Grigorijus Potašenko, eds., *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės Istorijos Ir Tradicijos Fenomenai: Tautų Atminties Vietos* [Historical and Traditional Phenomena of Grand Dutchy of Lithuania: Places of National Memory] (Vilnius: Vilnius University Press, 2013); Virginijus Savukynas, *Istorija Ir Mitologijos: Tapatybės Raiškos XVII-XIX Amžiaus Lietuvoje* [istory and Mithologies: Expressions of Identity in 17th-19th century Lithuania] (Vilnius: Centre for Public Policy Strategies, 2012); Irena Šutinienė, "Tautos Istorijos Mitai Lietuvos Gyventojų Sąmonėje," in *Istorinė Sąmonė Ir Istorijos Didaktika* [Myths of National History in the Consciousness of Lithuanian Inhabitants], eds. Arūnas Poviliūnas and Vilija Poviliūnienė (Vilnius: Solertija, 1997), 66-82; Irena Šutinienė, "Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės Paveldo Reikšmės Populiariosiose Tautinio Naratyvo Interpretacijose," *Lietuvos Istorijos Studijos* 21 (2008), 102-120.

[7]Danutė Gailienė, *Ką Jie Mums Padarė* [What have they done to us] (Vilnius: Tyto Alba, 2008); Vytautas Radžvilas, *Sunki Laisvė. Eseistika* [Difficult Freedom. Essays] (Vilnius: Tyto Alba, 2005); Tomas Sodeika and Arūnas Sverdiolas, "Gyvenimas Kolboje Ir Tuoj Po To," *Proskyna* 17, no. 8 (1991), 494-499; Arūnas Sverdiolas, *Apie Pamėklinę Būtį* [On Ghostlike Existence] (Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 2006).

[8]Antanas Andrijauskas, ed., *Nacionalinio Tapatumo Tęstinumas Ir Savikūra Eurointegracijos Sąlygomis* [National Identity's Continuity and Self-Creation in Euro-Integration Conditions] (Vilnius: Kronta, 2008).; Algis Norvilas, *Tauta, Kalba Ir Tapatybė* [Nation, Language and Identity] (Vilnius: Vilnius University Press, 2012).; Nerija Putinaitė, *Šiaurės Atėnų Tremtiniai. Lietuviškosios Tapatybė Paieškos Ir Europos Vizijos XXa.* [Exiles of the Northern Athens. Search for Lithuanian Identity and Visions of Europe in the 20th Century] (Vilnius: Aidai, 2004).

[9] The major contestation to this statement stems from Belarussian historiography that claims the GDL as a Belarussian heritage. This is also to different degrees argued by Norman Davies and particularly – Timothy Snyder. Norman Davies, *Vanished Kingdoms: The History of Half-Forgotten Europe* (London: Allen Lane, 2011b).; Timothy Snyder, *Tautų Rekonstrukcija: Lietuva, Lenkija, Ukraina, Baltarusija, 1569-1999* [*The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999*], ed. Rimantas Matulis, Antroji laida. ed. (Vilnius: Mintis, 2008).

[10]Edvardas Gudavičius, *Lietuvos Europėjimo Kelias* [Lithuanian path of Europeisation] (Vilnius: Aidai, 2002).

somewhat romantic fashion, searching for a Lithuanian *Volkgeist*.[11] There have also been efforts to see historical Lithuania as a self-sufficient empire.[12] Another common historical approach is based on a positivist historical rationale that focuses on socio-economic factors as a basis for constructing historical identity.[13] These discussions have an impact on formulating foreign policy as well as political rituals and identity politics in Lithuania. It also influences certain nationalist and liberal movements in the society.

Probably the main gap in the historical identity-related discussions in Lithuania is the lack of self-reflection. The key questions here are as follows: 'what is our historical/political identity? Who are we? What is and what is not our heritage?' or 'How do we preserve who we are?' rather than 'how do we understand ourselves in relation to historical facts, and why do we interpret them the way we do?' There are texts that explore such and similar questions, relating the form of Lithuanian historiography to the Soviet experience.[14] However, there is no comprehensive study of the ways that Lithuanian identity is being constructed and/or understood nowadays, and the reasons why it is being understood this way. This gap can be filled through an anthropological approach to politics and history, which this dissertation is trying to do.

Lithuanian political identity, just like those of other post-USSR states is strongly related to the consequences of the Soviet regime's occupation. This has been studied from many different angles. There have been insightful cultural and political critiques stemming from the liberal positions, *inter alia*, critically analysing the intrinsic collectivism within the popular nationalistic rhetoric,[15] emphasizing the conformist nature of the post-Soviet Lithuanians and tracing the origins of this tendency back to regime's political practices.[16] A similar type of critique of post-Soviet political thinking in Lithuania is presented in a

[11]Romualdas Grigas, *Senieji Lietuviai: Tapatybės Bruožai Ir Jų Likimas* [The Ancient Lithuanians: Features of Identity and Their Fate] (Vilnius: VPU Press, 2009).
[12]This approach is quite controversial, and rarely taken very seriously, most notably being developed in the context of the post-Soviet historical heritage debates among different national schools of historiography. However Zenonas Norkus has produced a methodically strongly grounded interpretation worth closer study. See Gintaras Beresnevičius, *Imperijos Darymas. Lietuviškos Ideologijos metmenys*. *Europos Sąjunga Ir Lietuvos Geopolitika XXI a. Pirmoje Pusėje* [The Making of an Empire. An Outline of Lithuanian Ideology and Lithuanian Geopolitics at the Beginning of the 21st Century] (Vilnius: Vilnius University Press, 2003); Zenonas Norkus, *Nepasiskelbusi Imperija* [The Unproclaimed Empire] (Vilnius: Aidai, 2009).
[13]Bronius Genzelis, *Socialinės Ir Politinės Minties Raida Lietuvoje* [The Development of Social and Political Thought in Lithuania] (Vilnius: Margi Raštai, 2005).
[14]Aurimas Švedas, *Matricos Nelaisvėje:Sovietmečio Lietuvių Istoriografija* [In the Captivity of the Matrix: Soviet Lithuanian historiography] (Vilnius: Aidai, 2009).
[15]Leonidas Donskis, *Tyliosios Alternatyvos* [Silent Alternatives] (Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2008).; Leonidas Donskis, *Taip, Bet… Nepolitologiniai Svarstymai Apie Politiką* [Yes, But… The Non-political Considerations on Politics] (Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2006); Vytautas Kavolis, *Sąmoningumo Trajektorijos: Lietuvos Kultūros Modernėjimo Aspektai* [Trajectories of Consciousness: Lithuanain Cultural Modernisation aspects] (Vilnius: Vyturys, 1997).
[16]Nerija Putinaitė, *Nenutrūkusi Styga: Prisitaikymas Ir Pasipriešinimas Sovietų Lietuvoje* [The String That Never Ripped: Adaptation and Resistance in Soviet Lithuania] (Vilnius: Aidai, 2007).

more conservative literature as well.[17] However, what is missing is an account of the reasons for this type of nationalism from an anthropological and philosophical perspective. Indeed, the very use of particular words in the Lithuanian language to describe the nation, as shown by Vylius Leonavičius, can shed light on the complex epistemological constellations around both the political and cultural notion of 'Lithuanian-ness'.[18]

Using quantitative methodology, some research attempts to assess the post-Soviet political situation of Lithuania in the field of social sciences.[19] However, quantitative methodology fails to inquire into, and take account of, people's experience, knowledge and understanding. As this dissertation will demonstrate, it is often lived experience that fills political concepts with meanings as well as provides the basis for certain political choices and predeterminations. What is often omitted in quantitative research is the question why one makes this or that choice, or has this or that opinion and whether he actually knows what he is talking about in the first place.[20] There is a profound lack of research in the area of political anthropology. Generally speaking, this area is missing a systematic approach and a theory that could explain the post-Soviet phenomena, which this dissertation strives to do.

Naturally, Lithuania's choice of joining the European Union and NATO indicates its Western-oriented identity politics. However the process of 'Europeanisation' in the post-Soviet context is not a simple one, as it has various meanings and can be analysed at different levels.[21] Nevertheless, the issue is very important to Lithuanian self-perception – as evidenced by the sheer numbers of texts in different academic disciplines that focus on this process. There have been sociological considerations about the social changes in Lithuania as a result of joining the EU, and the effect of this process of integration to Lithuanian identity.[22]

Lithuanian cultural studies are particularly rich in articles and edited collections examining questions of value transitions and identity-related cultural changes in the context of

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[17]Radžvilas, *Sunki Laisvė. Eseistika*

[18]Vylius Leonavičius, "Bendruomenės Savimonės Raida Ir *Tautos* Sąvokos Reikšmės," *Sociologija. Mintis Ir Veiksmas* 3, no. 2 (1999), 33-44.

[19]Zenonas Norkus, *Kokia Demokratija, Koks Kapitalizmas?: Pokomunistinė Transformacija Lietuvoje Lyginamosios Istorinės Sociologijos Požiūriu: Mokslinė Monografija* [What Kind of Democracy? What kind of Capitalism? Post-communist Transformations in Lithuania From a Historical Sociology Perspective: A Scientific Monography] (Vilnius: Vilnius University Press, 2008); Ainė Ramonaitė, *Posovietinės Lietuvos Politinė Anatomija* [Political Anatomy of the Post-Soviet Lithuania] (Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2007).

[20]Sverdiolas, *Apie Pamėklinę Būtį*, 138-140.

[21] Neringa Klumbytė, "Tauta, laisvė ir stiprūs jausmai [Nation, Freedom and Strong Feelings]," *Bernardinai.lt*,http://www.bernardinai.lt/straipsnis/2011-03-18-neringa-klumbyte-tauta-laisve-ir-stiprus-jausmai/59668, (Last accessed: March 18, 2012).)

[22]Eugenija Krukauskienė, ed., *Europos Keliu: Lietuvos Socialinis Ir Kultūrinis Savitumas Integruojantis Į Europos Sąjungą* [On the European Path: Lithuanian Social and Cultural Distinctiveness During the Integration to the European Union] (Vilnius: Philosophy and Sociology Institute, 2000).

European and Western (re-)integration, as well as globalization and global technological development.[23] Anti-European sentiments circulating within the society have also been studied.[24] Evidently, the relationship between modern Lithuanian identity tradition (starting with the beginning of the twentieth century, and possessing heavy romanticized nationalistic implications) and the visions of as well as expectations from the European Union is problematic.[25] Yet there is very much to be said about the question of authenticity in this context, as during the process of European integration, political identity and sense of being 'true to oneself' becomes a very sensitive question both at the national and international level.

All things considered, there is an extensive range of literature written on Lithuanian political, cultural and historical identities (which are interrelated). The topic is very widely escalated, the major contexts of discussion being Lithuanian history, Soviet experience, and 'Europeanisation'. The discussion seems to divide into two subtopics – those of 'internal' and 'external' political identity. Extensive sources on these topics can be found in fields of social and cultural studies, also history and philosophy. However the discussion lacks the attention to the experiential level of the matter, as well as inquiry into the meaning and essence of the transition itself, which the concept of liminality is capable of. A question of authenticity is also worth raising in terms of political identity formation, as it could explain important tensions in contemporary Lithuanian identity politics.

Lithuania in a comparative post-Soviet perspective

The debates on identity formation in a broader post-Soviet context are similarly wide-ranging and interdisciplinary. In political sciences, one can find different types of critique and analysis of the post-Soviet identity politics. The demise of the USSR provided new questions for Sovietology.[26] Dominique Arel argues that the categories used in the first censuses of some newly independent states had been constructed to satisfy the need for constituting a new national majority and thus consolidating its power.[27] The post-Soviet

[23]Živilė Gaižutytė-Filipavičienė and Vytautas Rubavičius, eds., *Nacionalinis Tapatumas Medijų Kultūroje* [National Identity in Media Culture] (Vilnius: Kitos Knygos, 2011); Stanislovas Juknevičius, ed., *Kultūrologija (11): Kultūros Savitumas Ir Universalumas* [Cultural Studies (11): Cultural Particularity and Universality] (Vilnius: Institute of Culture, Philosophy, and Art, 2004); Stanislovas Juknevičius, ed., *Post-Communist Lithuania: Culture in Transition* (Vilnius: Institute of Culture, Philosophy, and Art, 2005); Rūta Žiliukaitė, ed., *Dabartinės Lietuvos Kultūros Raidos Tendencijos* [Contemporary Tendencies of Lithuanian Cultural Development: Shifts in Values] (Vilnius: Institute of Culture, Philosophy, and Art, 2007).
[24]Gediminas Lankauskas, "Others, the Nation, and its (Dis)Integration in 'European' Lithuania," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 18, no. 2 (2010), 193-208.
[25]Putinaitė, *Šiaurės Atėnų Tremtiniai. Lietuviškosios Tapatybė Paieškos Ir Europos Vizijos XXa.*, 230-232.
[26]Alexander Motyl, *The Post-Soviet Nations. Perspectives on the Demise of the USSR* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).
[27]Dominique Arel, "Demography and Politics in the First Post-Soviet Censuses: Mistrusted State, Contested Identities," *Population* 57, no. 6 (2002), 801-827.

states manipulated categories, such as language and ethnic background, to attribute a person to one or another civic identity. Liberals argue that the form of liberalism that has spread in the newly constituted states resembles the national liberalism of the nineteenth century and lacks the universalist character that is commonly associated with the contemporary liberal tradition. The new nationalisms are therefore seen as anachronistic and a possible threat to liberalism and, consequently, to peace.[28] Seemingly, there are also dangers behind the fact that the post-Soviet countries inherited the 'institutionalized' perception of nationality that can later cause ethnically based conflicts inside the newly formed states.[29]

The post-USSR countries can be grouped according to the overall orientation of either towards the East or the West. This depends on several factors, such as the extent to which the nationalists in the countries were supported by the wider society in the early 1990s, and the historical factors, for example, the historical influence of Habsburg and Romanov imperialism among others.[30] Alexander Agadjanian touches upon a number of questions about the relations between religion, political doctrine and identity politics. He sees positive aspects of religiously inclined national identity, as it helped avoid the wider, inner conflicts in the post-Soviet Asian states.[31] The political literature on the topic, however, usually analyses the institutional level of the problem but fails to inquire into people's experience of these developments. The arguments are constructed on the socio-economic and political levels, without an anthropological or a philosophical inquiry.

The notion of transition is usually encountered in the 'transition paradigm', describing the presumed democratisation and liberalisation processes that have taken place in the non-democratic regimes around the world since 1970s. The post-Soviet topic has its own cluster in the 'paradigm'.[32] However it has been argued that the paradigm lacks realism, as contemporary events show that unlike the paradigm was predicting, the transition to democracy does not happen smoothly, and not all of the 'grey zone' countries went down the path of democratization in the first place.[33] Furthermore, the aforementioned political

[28]Bear Braumoeller, "Liberal Nationalism and the Democratic Peace in the Soviet Successor States," *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (1997), 375-402.
[29]Rogers Brubaker, "Nationhood and the National Question in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Eurasia: An Institutionalist Account," *Theory and Society* 23, no. 1 (1994), 47-78.
[30]Rawi Abdelal, "Memories of Nations and States: Institutional History and National Identity in Post-Soviet Eurasia," *Nationalities Paper* 30, no. 3 (2002), 459-484.
[31]Alexander Agadjanian, "Revising Pandora's Gifts: Religious and National Identity in the Post-Soviet Societal Fabric," *Europe-Asia Studies* 53, no. 3 (2001), 473-488.
[32]Anatol Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the Path to Independence*(New Haven and London; Yale University Press, 1993); Sabrina Petra Ramet, *Adaptation and Transformation in Communist and Post-Communist Systems* (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1992); Stephen White, Graeme Gill and Darrell Slider, *The Politics of Transition: Shaping a Post-Soviet Future* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
[33]Thomas Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 1 (2002), 17-19.

literature does not inquire into human experience as the source of identity formation. Nor does it treat the transitional state as a qualitatively different experience to 'normality', where social and political life is relatively stable, and not changing in a rapid fashion. The notion of transition used in this dissertation is that of lived change in human experience. And though it still remains closely related to the socioeconomic and political life, it also addresses the process of existential self-redefinition, which the traditional use of the term did not.

Probably the most interesting approach to analysing the transitional processes, which also involves an intention to 'understand' the experience in the post-Soviet world is that of post-colonialism. Perhaps one of the most important post-colonialist works that studies the formation of political identity in post-Soviet countries is offered by Graham Smith, Vivien Law, Andrew Wilson, Annette Bohr, and Edward Allworth.[34] They explain how newly born nation-states reorganize their identity and re-interpret their historical narratives in effort to establish their new political identities. However, what this book does lack is attention to human experience. Instead, its focus is on the historical, ethno-political and literary aspects.

Apart from this book, the post-colonialist literature on post-Soviet region is limited in number and scope.[35]It is possibly the case because the post-colonialist approach is indebted to a Marxist critique of Western capitalism and different forms of imperialism. Paradoxically, it is the anti-Marxist (in its Soviet form) critique that lies at the very heart of the post-Soviet problematic. Traditionally, the critique would be aimed at capitalist colonialism, and it would stem from a neo-Marxist anti-capitalist background. Whereas in this case, the colonialism and imperialism that has to be criticized is that of a Communist state. Thus at some point, the critique would have to criticize its own ideological roots. This therefore might be an explanation why some leftist thinkers would be reluctant to analyse the instance of post-Soviet countries in terms of post-colonialism.[36] Furthermore, even though post-colonialism is closely related to the post-structuralist/late modern subjectivism, which by definition should avoid positivist thinking, through its Marxist origins it inherits the same materialist dialectics, as well as a notion of inherent *a priori* struggle within the society. This dissertation, however, seeks to detach itself from Marxist perceptions of a society, in search for an alternative. While it recognizes the presence of

[34]Graham Smith et al., *Nation-Building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands: The Politics of National Identities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
[35]David Chioni Moore, "Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique ," *PMLA* 116, no. 1 (2001), 111-128.
[36]Karl Jirgens, "Fusion of Discourse: Postcolonial/Postmodern Horizon in Baltic Culture," in *Baltic Postcolonialism*, ed. Violeta Kelertas (New York: Rodopi, 2006), 46.

political struggle within the society, it does not hold this factor foundational.Furthermore, apart from a few studies in social sciences and economics,[37] the post-colonialist approach is in many cases dedicated mainly to analysing literature, and less so to inquire into post-Soviet political identity.[38] Moreover, the relationship between identity and authenticity is not questioned by the debates on post-Soviet identity politics.

This dissertation seeks to fill this gap in existing scholarship. It aims to answer the following questions that are usually underexplored: To what extent and why are these newly-formed post-Soviet identities (in-)authentic? How do they emerge and how are they perceived? To what extent and in what ways do people actually experience the 'self' through these political identities? The post-USSR period in countries other than Russia hasnot been properly assessed through the perspective of liminality, quasi-metaphysics and political cosmology. There is a lack of research in the fields of political philosophy and political anthropology on the topic of Lithuanian political identity and its implications. The objective of this dissertation is to fill these gaps in the literature and to propose a new way of understanding post-Soviet transition and identity formation.

1.3 Theoretical framework

The main ambition at the theoretical level in this dissertation is to present a convincing argument that would be positioned on the premise of hermeneutic understanding of lived and experienced reality rather than mistrust and scepticism towards the real. Paul Ricoeur's famous phrase about Marx, Freud and Nietzsche being the 'masters of school of suspicion' comes to mind when talking about their philosophies and their attempts to unmask the 'illusion' in order to reveal the 'reality' beyond it.[39] This common ground of scepticism and perhaps even nihilism is what unites the dominant intellectual strands of both modernity and even more so late modernity.[40] That, in turn, suggests that late modernity is the intensification and radicalisation of modernity rather than a departure from it.[41]In this

[37]Aleš Debeljak, *The Hidden Handshake: National Identity and Europe in the Post-Communist World* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004); Ingo Schröder and Asta Vonderau, *Changing Economies and Changing Identities in Postsocialist Eastern Europe* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2008).
[38]Rasa Baločkaitė, *(Post)Kolonializmas Vidurio Ir Rytų Europoje: Mokymo Priemonė* [(Post)colonialism in Central and Eastern Europe: A Teaching Tool] (Kaunas: Vytauto Didžiojo Universitetas, 2010); Violeta Kelertas, *Baltic Postcolonialism* (New York: Rodopi, 2006).
[39]Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 32.
[40] Diana Coole demonstrates how the issue of negativity pervades the entire tradition of modern Western philosophy from Kant to Deleuze: Diana H. Coole, *Negativity and Politics: Dionysus and Dialectics from Kant to Poststructuralism* (London: Routledge, 2000).
[41]Here one can go further and suggest with Bruno Latour that there was never any absolute, irreversible break in history that gave rise to a coherent system of ideas and institutions which we commonly call 'modernity'. See Bruno Latour, *We have Never been Modern* [Nous n'avons jamais été modernes. Essai d'anthropologie

sense, this dissertation draws on a growing body of work that questions the dominant strand of modernity without however embracing the prevailing relativist rationale suggested by late modernity. This middle ground attempts to overcome the logic of rationalist[42] scepticism and nihilism by deploying concepts taken from the Platonist tradition and the approach of hermeneutic philosophy, also taking into account the pre-reflected, a-rational human experiential aspect.

This is done in effort to transcend the predominant conceptual dialectics regarding identity. On the one hand identity is articulated as a fluid 'cultural construct', which is relative, purely epistemic, constantly changing and has no relation to ontology. On the other hand, it is understood as unchaning essence, which can be estimated, determined and conserved. This implies either a relativist articulation of identity, according to which genuine selfhood is impossible and there is no such thing as authentic being, or renders it unrealistically stagnant and then fails to account for historical process and human agency. And this in turn contrasts with a basic nature of life as a process. Therefore a foundational question of whether being is static or dynamic emerges.

In order to address the question the dissertation uses the notion of embedded existence understood as participation in life (but also historical and political process). To illustrate this point, an analogy of a tree would be useful, which is in one sense stabile in its form, yet it is growing throughout its embedded existence. The analogy incorporates both change and stability within being, without counterposing the static to the dynamic. Instead it integrates them within a lived historical and political process. However it also has another aspect. Not only does a tree have a certain integral core vertical connecting its roots with branches, but the process of it growing is slow and gradual. Therefore a tempo, with which the change in its structure is taking place, has a certain normal pace and can be disrupted invoking liminal conditions (breakage, transformation, etc.). Its authentic existence as a 'self' (as a live tree, not a chair, not a plank) is determined by upholding a certain core integrity, but also by gradual growth and transformation.

Therefore a notion of identity that this dissertation employs has not only a nominal but also an existential value. Politically (and politics here is considered a human affair) this means

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symétrique] tr. Catherine Porter (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993); Zygmunt Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1992); Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodernity and its Discontents* (Cambridge: Polity, 1997); David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989); Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* [La condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir] (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); Karlis Racevskis, *Modernity's Pretenses: Making Reality Fit Reason from Candide to the Gulag* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).

[42] I am using the term 'rational' in a modern positivist sense. In the rest of the dissertation I normally use the term 'rationalist' to capture this meaning.

that authentic existential identity requires both continuity and flexibility. However the structural change here has to take place at a 'human' pace, the approximate reference for measurement of which then could perhaps be human lifetime. This insures the endurance of authentic existential identity, and the transmission of legacy and cultural inheritance. In short, it ensures a relatively normal and unbroken livelihood of a polity.

However, such continuity of identity is charachteristic to some polities in the Western Europe (which themselves are not without their issues), but the history of political identities in the Eastern Europe is often much more complex and liminal. Apart from the two World Wars and brutal modernisation in the Soviet Union, which methodically broke the 'cores' of most Eastern European 'trees', in many cases (such as in Lithuanian, Polish, etc.) the 'core' has also been broken before. Furthermore, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the post-USSR polities had to redefine and often create their political identities anew. And in many cases these efforts entailed not only political, but also existential revival. It is this kind of specific modern existential context in the Central and Eastern Europe that the dissertation will develop its theoretical framework.

Main accounts of political identity

When it comes to discussing political identity, the first two terms that come to mind are ethnicity and nationhood. The predominant anthropological conception of these two terms assumes that ethnicity is an essentialist category, an intrinsic characteristic to a collective, at least insofar as talking about modern times, while nationhood is something artificial and constructed in a particular historical period.[43] The essentialism of ethnicity is being understood either in cultural primordialist terms (as in case of Clifford Geertz or Donald Horowitz) or in socio-biological terms (Lev Gumilev, Pierre L. van den Berghe).[44] Other ways of explaining the origins of ethnicity and nationhood are either through rational choice theory, as in case of Frederik Barth, Paul Brasss and others, or through Marxist theory.[45] There are also contestations that not only nationality, but also nationality as a continuation of ethnicity is an imaginary construct, which makes it also artificial, as claimed by Benedict Anderson or Eric Hobsbawm.[46] Yet ethno-symbolists such as

[43]Nortautas Statkus, *Etniškumas Ir Nacionalizmas: Istorinis Ir Teorinis Aspektai* [Ethnicity and Nationalism: The Historical and Theoretical Aspects] (Vilnius: Vilnius University Press, 2003), 277.
[44]Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic, 1973); Lev Gumilev, *Ethnogenesis and the Biosphere* (Moscow: Progress, 1990); Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Pierre L. Van den Berghe, *Race and Racism: A Comparative Perspective*Wiley, 1967).
[45]Statkus, *Etniškumas Ir Nacionalizmas: Istorinis Ir Teorinis Aspektai*, 277
[46]Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

Anthony Smith emphasize the embeddedness of ethnicity into nationalism through a historical process.[47]

The ideas put forward in this dissertation may be most closely linked to those by Benedict Anderson and Anthony Smith, yet they differ significantly. First of all, instead of only inquiring into nationalism and ethnicity, the attention is concentrated on political identity in a broad sense, as human experience of political existence. In doing so, it inquires into political identity as a part of ontological self, not only as an intellectually perceived belonging to certain constructed collective. It is not claimed here that by being imaginary, as Benedict Anderson shows, nationhood is less real or, indeed, authentic. Instead my argument is that imagination, representation, symbolism and mythology are as real a part of politics – at least as important as power or economic factors. As long as the experience of political 'selfhood' exists, it matters to politics. The dissertation explains how that is possible by concentrating on the moment of transition, of political becoming and, crucially, on the human experience of such a process – with a particular focus on the case of post-Soviet Lithuanian transition. It inquires into the phenomenology of this transition, where, as my research shows, these symbols emerge from.

Anthony Smith's theory recognizes ethno-symbols that constitute political identity as often being counter-factual and inflated as well. However, he claims that they still constitute the sense of bond and collectivity within nations. However, even though this dissertation does use historical analysis and explores the origins of political identity, it is not aimed at defining political identity in a nominalist sense (as for Smith). Nor is it its aim to explain the emergence of ethnicity and nationalism as such historically. It shifts the emphasis from the nominalist explanations of nationhood to hermeneutic understanding of identity through historical arratives and imaginaries and political cosmologies that constitute particular identities in a post-Soviet context.

New approach

In reaction to a large part of modern and late modern theory, this dissertation seeks the disillusionment from the 'disillusionment', in an effort to reappraise the value and importance of imagination, myth and belief to human existence, showing that it is not and cannot be contradictory to politics. As the case of Lithuania and the other chosen countries will suggest, myth and belief are fundamental not only to real and tangible politics but also to the self and to being. The dissertation therefore argues that the process of becoming and of political identity formation cannot be properly understood and theorised by merely

[47]Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).

focusing on the two aspects of human existence – either an objective political power play (within a historical process) or the intellectualised articulation of identity (abstracted from any historical context). The third account, which avoids the pitfalls of the other two, stems from the appreciation of the finitude of human knowledge and thus the importance of experience, a-rationality, myth recognition and imagination.[48]

The theory in this dissertation rests on three assumptions about the human condition.[49] The first and the most important premise, which it holds to be self-evident, is that *human beings are imperfect, finite and non-absolute*. Humans make mistakes, absolute knowledge is inaccessible to a human being, and human beings are mortal. The fact that no one knows what exactly happens afterwards is just another proof of human imperfection and the finitude of knowledge accessible to the human mind.

Secondly, in terms of relation with the world, *every human being has an existential focational point* and is embedded within his or her own existence. One inevitably relates to one's surroundings from 'here' to 'there'. What one sees 'there' is interrelated with the 'here' not only spatially and temporally, but also experientially. This is not to claim, though, that ontology is subjective. What it does imply is that at all times, all humans are embedded within their particular being, they experience it, and cannot detach from it entirely. Intellectual abstraction and reflection, as a result, is a partially re-cognitive and partially imaginary act, performed by a finite mind, which may be more or less trained and fit for the task. The latter also implies a normal inequality in human capability to recognise or misrecognise as well as unequal ability to imagine. In turn, this implies the possibility of some perspective being less true than other, which helps avoid relativism.

The finitude of the human mind, however, is the reason, which allows for the *third aspect of human condition – misrecognition*, but also – for the existence of the illogical and the paradoxical. Because being happens as it does, and we are embedded within the process, we try to make sense of it by creating finite knowledge, forming truth claims, which are necessary for the orientation.[50] However, due to its finitude, knowledge is not the source of paradox. Instead, it is the source of the perception of paradoxality regarding what happens, with reference to itself. Therefore the theoretical starting pointhere can be called a 'veil of

[48] Recognition here should not be understood as the act of 'figuring out' the actual truth about something inferred, but rather as getting a glimpse, even if blurred, vague and undefined, into what actually *is*. Plato's recognition of 'true ideas' in this instance is also understood in this manner.

[49] Yet I do not hold that these are the only criteria that define human. Quite on the contrary, I would argue that just like it is the case with all the rest of ontology, humanity is impossible to comprehend (as in 'hold within knowledge') in its entirety.

[50] Truth, therefore, is not something that is not a lie but something that is not hidden. I will expand on this further. Ideology as a term is based on the notion of truth that is opposed to falsehood. Mythology, on the other hand, is based on a notion of truth as of that which is not hidden.

naivety', looking at the phenomenology of beliefs and identities at hand and trying to empathically and hermeneutically understand them and people's relation to them instead of trying to 'dispel' the 'false beliefs and myths', supposedly uncovering the 'true' underlying economic or power interests. The dissertation tries to *understand* the experiences of people participating in the political processes as well as symbolical, mythological narratives used to explain them. The dissertation establishes that identity formation cannot be adequately understood through means of purely rationalist self-interest either. Neither is it only a result of objective political, social or economic conditioning, adequately and fully measurable in positivist scientific methods, nor a mere intellectual project, understood purely in constructivist terms.

Consequentially, politics and political identity formation is seen here as a partly mythological process of human activity, deriving from human needs, such as the need for stability, certainty and belief and human finitudes, such as the finitude of knowledge. At the same time, politics and political identity formation are a partial foundation for an authentic human existence, giving people the purpose and explanation for political action. By *political identity* I mean being and the perception thereof of oneself or other as a *persona* or a qualitatively distinct 'self' in political interaction. This *persona* can form and exist at the personal, communal, state or international level. It is historical since it emerges within lived time; it is mutable, as it gradually changes and transforms; it is factual insofar that it is power-related; and it is fictional insofar that it is reflected by a human mind. This way it is impossible to define *the political* or at least the part of it that has to do with identity formation without relating it to humanity. It is a realm of human will, thought and action or participation, relative to the particularity of the situation, yet limited by humanity itself.

Without disputing the objectivity or actuality of the world, the disposition in terms of reasoning in this dissertation is agnostic in character and threefold in structure. First of all, it explores the human (not institutional, i.e. not purely rationalist) origins of politics, and not aiming to come to purely rationalist knowledge as a result of this inquiry. This is an interpretivist, not scientific or naturalist project. Neither is it a facto-graphic description of the post-Communist 'transition'. Instead it is an effort to understand the human, phenomenological meaning of this transition. Therefore the foundational intention here is not to establish methodological validity or generalization, but rather veracity, criticism and reformulation of the way we understand identity.

Secondly, the research starts with the recognition that human knowledge, capability and rationality are finite and imperfect and that this has important implications for politics. It is

this perception of political reality as something not necessarily rational and measurable that allows for the appreciation of the importance of human experience in the process. It sees the process of identity formation as consisting of three interlinked spheres: the historical/political context, the experiential level and the intellectual reflection and articulation. Each of these three spheres will be discussed in detail and demonstrated in separate chapters of this dissertation, in the context of the main case study of Lithuania. This way, instead of understanding the process as binary, i.e. stuck within the interaction between theory and practice, ideology and matter, law and power, this dissertation uses a triadic structure of enquiry. The third element here is the experiential.

The central issue that the work is dealing with, especially in terms of the political context, is transition, perceived as the process of *becoming*. It thus draws into question the concepts of identity, authenticity and 'selfhood', which will be discussed further. Here, identity formation, the *becoming* emerges as a plural social phenomenon, but is at the same time based on shared human activities, customs, experiences and practices. Some of it is an intentional search for identity and some of it unfolds as one of the outcomes of the overall, super-intentional political processes.

To summarise: the theoretical approach that this dissertation employs and at the same time constructs consists of three parts. First of all, my account of politics and identity shifts the emphasis from the binary pole of essence and construct, which characterises the dominant interpretations of identity, to the notion of human experience. It is argued that it is fundamental for understanding post-Soviet political identity formation. Secondly, it hermeneutically inquires into the forms of political practice, instead of concentrating on power relations, in effort to uncover the source of the emerging post-Soviet epistemology, in which the new political 'self' is articulated. Finally, instead of merely describing identity formation, it critically challenges it at the epistemological and political level via analysing the real political outcomes and anthropological premises of these identity formation processes.

1.4 Conceptual approach

In order to rethink the question of political identity formation, it is necessary to have a new set of conceptual 'tools' and approaches that enable a different articulation of the question. For this reason, in this section, various philosophical and anthropological concepts, which this dissertation deploys, will be explored in greater detail. Some of the concepts, such as *narratives* and *images,* are of a more methodological character, used as tools to approach

the fluid reality of experience and imagination. Yet others, such as *mask-identity* and*quasi-metaphysics*, are of a more assertive character, 'diagnosing' the condition of societies in question. However, it is the joint combination of all of these concepts that allow for the formulation of the new, holistic approach to the topic of identity, some serving as means to ask questions and others to formulate answers. The insights that these concepts capture in case of post-Soviet Lithuania will later be applied to other post-Soviet and post-Communist cases, such as Estonia, Poland, Russia and Ukraine. The aim is to understand hermeneutically the cultural meanings in local politics, perceive the human experience of the people, participating in these processes of transition and turmoil. From that perspective, the dissertation will critically engage with the epistemology about the self and the world that is being employed in those cultural contexts and that shapes their political identities.

Narrative history

In order to re-assess the nature of history and its role in political identity formation, this dissertation will employ the notion of history as a *narrative*. Alasdair MacIntyre has argued against the objectivity of history, suggesting that the narrator, the historian, the 'subject' of narration is itself inevitably embedded within the history, within a certain particular lived context.[51] This is also what Karl Polanyi suggests in his book *The Great Transformation*, when criticizing the objectified and over-rationalized vision of a human being, as portrayed by Neo-Kantians. He shows how the economic life (which is popularly perceived as objective, rational interest-based and universal) is embedded in the particularities of culture.[52] Paul Ricoeur in *Time and Narrative* demonstrated how narrated history does not unfold in a strictly chronological and objective time when reflected upon by the embedded participant.[53] Therefore the narrator has particular conditions for reflecting upon, interpreting and talking about their lived reality. It interprets reality, even when appealing to objectivity. In other words, any type of history is inevitably a story. It is very much related to particular people, particular conditions and particular contexts. And every story has a storyteller, who has a focal point, who uses certain personally or culturally pre-established categories, preconceptions, and images. It is this immediate relation to the narrative that provides 'objective' facts and figures with real, lived meaning, thus also influencing the political reality of the society that shares – partially or fully – this narrative.

[51] Alasdair MacIntyre, "First Principles, Final Ends and Contemporary Philosophical Issues," in *The MacIntyre Reader*, ed. Kelvin Knight (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 171-201.
[52]Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1944).
[53]Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* [Temps et Récit], trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer, Vol. 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984, 1985, 1988).

This is not to put forward a relativist claim that ontology itself is dependent on human cognition. On the contrary, the dissertation argues that one could recognise or misrecognise the truth rather than generate it using one's finite mind. It is only to emphasize the finitude of human capabilities to 'have' truth in their grasp. This on its turn implies a Platonic notion of truth – as that which is not hidden instead of that which is not lie. Such an approach acknowledges reality within subjective human experience, yet without abandoning the idea that it is only an image of some more profound being beyond immediate human cognition or human grasp in general. Instead of a supposedly non-participatory history, what we should speak of are *narratives* of this or that participant.

Image and political cosmology

The topic of non-rational, non-factographic factors that affect actual domestic and international politics and everyday life have been discussed in several different fields of academia. In the field of International Relations, the idea has been most significantly developed by Constructivist theorists such as Alexander Wendt, suggesting the dependability of rational national interests upon constructed assumptions and identities that pervade the international society. But this dissertation is not on international relations and thus also deals with domestic, cultural and social and existential issues, which cannot be fully addressed by the Constructivist theory. Secondly, it introduces the aspect of human experience as a profoundly important factor in establishing both knowledge and identities, which I will elaborate upon in more detail in the following chapters. It thus challenges the popularly perceived duality in social sciences between 'nature versus nurture', rendering the notion of a social construct ontologically problematic.

When it comes to discussing political identity in relation to non-rationality in politics, a theory by Benedict Anderson has to be mentioned. Similarly as the constructivists, Anderson claimed nationalism to be a product of collective imagination. He recognised, however, that what he sees as collectively 'imagined' national identity had profound impact upon politics and motivated nationalist clashes in the nineteenth century. Originating in the Marxist materialist normativity, however, Anderson's theory implies the non-reality or lesser reality of what he calls imagined, as opposed to rational social factors, such as economic, social or educational conditioning. This dissertation will demonstrate, however, that this national 'imagination' does not only derive from some elite that bestows it upon masses, but rather that the nature of what we will call political cosmology is much more embedded in social folklore.

In this respect, Anderson's theory has been convincingly developed by Charles Taylor, who introduced the concept of a social imaginary, which I will draw upon when talking about inter-subjective political cosmology. Taylor introduced the idea that modern (Western) societies have certain background, contextual networks of conceptions, expectations and common knowledge which regulate and normalise social and political action. It establishes a common notion of how members of a society imagine the surrounding world, and themselves, their relations inside as well as outside the society.[54]

Social imaginary is largely unreflected, taken for granted within the society. However it also presupposes how various events, ideas and phenomena are being perceived, thus creating a certain notion of what is reasonable, rational, good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable, etc. It establishes certain ethical normativity, justifying political and social behaviour. The concept of an image that I will use builds on Taylor's theory and signifies a socially established symbolical meaning cluster, a piece of common knowledge in a particular society. It will be argued that these different images, often irrational and non-factual, but bearing strong emotional and associative charge, frequently act as sources of motivation and justification for political action both domestically and internationally.

The origins of these images can vary. They can be grounded historically and expressed in symbolical dates, events, places, personalities, etc. They can also be grounded politically and expressed in conceptions of political friends and enemies, ideas such as 'more/less civilized countries', 'developing states', 'imperialist states', etc. Another possible source is social: images can express 'class', 'the people', a subculture, an ethnic or religious minority, etc. Yet another source is cultural – expressing in celebrations, heraldic signatures, song contests or even sports; or in other spheres of human life. All of these images, however, are at the same time imagined/constructed and factual/material. They describe a certain phenomenon in life, yet they do not capture it in its entirety. They 'abbreviate' some aspects of a phenomenon, such as the particularity of each unit of the group that the image entails, while attaching others, such as certain quality, judgment or symbolic meaning that the image has/represents.

This does not mean, however, that these are fake, not real or less real. Their presence and importance is as real as that of concepts such as national interest, human rights, capital or racism, which are in themselves partially factual and partially imaginary, inferred or constructed. In this, images can be seen as myths that are based on actual events (or other subjects), but through their use and social reciprocation gain different meanings that are detached from the factuality of the event, and instead relates to the ever-changing context

[54]Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 23.

of use. In many cases they are even more influential than the factuality itself, thus rendering the non-factual factual. For instance, countries struggle for an image of a national interest, some people hate others because they attach certain associative meanings to a different race, yet other people hate some because they attach other associative meanings to financial prosperity. Therefore, through human experience, through political practice, images become factual, they become a type of self-fulfilling prophecy and thus cannot be categorically labelled as false or non-existent.

This conception of social knowledge closely relates to anthropological theories about modern myths. Probably the most significant author to write on this topic is Roland Barthes, who presents a critical analysis of his contemporary society, uncovering the factual inadequacies and paradoxes in various modern myths.[55] Similarly to Anderson, he suggests the socially constructed origins of these myths that once again imply manipulative social mechanisms which thrive on the presumed falsehood of these myths. In this sense, his thought does not differ much from other neo-Marxist critical thinkers mentioned before. His work is pushed further by Raoul Girardet, who suggests a (slightly narrow) typology of political myths and instead of criticising the mythological element in politics he puts forward a structuralist effort to understand its pragmatic social function.[56] He argues that political mythology is particularly important in moments of turmoil and insecurity, when unifying, flexible images are required in order to provide sense and meaning in otherwise ambiguous situation.[57]

This dissertation will draw from Girardet's work on political mythology, expanding the typology of political images and applying it to the post-Soviet context. It will however expand the notion of political mythology, suggesting a different concept of *political cosmology*. Building on the conception of images mentioned before, it will argue that just like in the case of social imaginary, societies are inevitably embedded within the network of cosmological assumptions about the world, in form of images. And this induces the formation of identities, substantiating the rationale for political practices. Political cosmology provides society with the meaning for its political existence and motivation for political action. The cosmology, as well as the images, however, is not rigid in form or in content. It shifts and transforms through the embedded participation in the historical

[55]Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Vintage Classics, 2009).
[56]Raoul Girardet, *Politiniai Mitai Ir Mitologijos* [Mythes et mythologies politiques] (Vilnius: Apostrofa, 2007).
[57]This idea has been built upon by several authors when discussing Post-Soviet Eastern European politics. See, for example, Alexander Wöll and Harald Wydra, eds., *Democracy and Myth in Russia and Eastern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2008).

process. New images emerge, as the process continues, and new layers of identity integrate into the overall political cosmology of the society.

Liminality and human experience

The concept of transition in political sciences has been most notably conceptualized as a Hegelian teleological shift towards "the end of history", as prophesized by Fukuyama.[58] An entire field of Transition Studies emerged, assuming an eventual and inevitable liberalization and democratization of the post-Soviet world. Clearly, not only did the theory prove wrong factually, especially considering the latest political and ideological developments in the region, it is also quite narrow in its definition of political transition, which is only perceived in rationalist economic and political terms. It will be argued here that in fact perhaps the most important aspect of political transition is human experience, and visuality in particular, which dictates both the logics and teleology of both political and economic changes. This way the suggested understanding of transition not only expands the notion, but can also provide convincing explanation for why Fukuyama's 'end of history' never came.

In order to re-articulate transition as experience and practice, the dissertation will employ an anthropological concept of *liminality*.The French ethnographer and folklorist Arnold van Gennep introduced the concept of liminality in his book called *Rites of Passage*.[59] He used this term indescribing the rites of transition in pre-modern societies, when a member or a group in a community would leave one social mode of existence and enter another one, for example, when a boy is initiated into manhood.[60] Of course, these ritual stages cannot be directly applied to an uncontrolled large-scale transition in modern societies such as post-USSR countries. However, many scholars, including Agnese Horvath, Richard Sakwa, Arpad Szakolczai, Bjørn Thomassen and Harald Wydra, have demonstrated that thinking about transition in modern societies in terms of liminal experience can offer some very interesting insights.[61]

[58]Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).
[59]Arnold van Gennep, *Rites of Passage* [Rites de passage] (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 1960).
[60] I use the term 'mode of existence' instead of 'social role' because in tribal, pre-modern and traditional communities, unlike contemporary Western societies, one's social role predetermines an important part of one's personal existence, whereas 'social role' presupposes a superficial, 'mask-like' notion of one's involvement in the social.
[61] Agnese Horvath, *Modernism and Charisma* (London: Palgrave, 2013); Agnese Horvath and Bjørn Thomassen, "Mimetic Errors in Liminal Schismogenesis: On the Political Anthropology of the Trickster," *International Political Anthropology* 1, no. 1 (2008), 3-24; Richard Sakwa, "Liminality and Postcommunism: The Twenty-First Century as the Subject of History," *International Political Anthropology* 2, no. 1 (2009), 110-126; Árpád Szakolczai, "Liminality and Experience: Structuring Transitory Situations and Transformative Events," *International Political Anthropology* 2, no. 1 (2009), 141-172; Bjørn Thomassen, *Liminality and the Modern* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2014); Bjørn Thomassen, "Uses and Meanings of

Victor Turner understood that the notion of liminality is useful not only for explaining "in between periods", but also human reactions to liminal experiences.[62] Overall, liminality only makes sense in social dramas "as they unfold".[63] In this situation, meanings and phenomena that appear in the society may sometimes only make sense to those participating. In other occasions they can unfold on their own, without being controlled or perceived by anyone. The relation between the rational and the irrational here is the same as that between the sacred and secular, life and death, the real and unreal, good and bad, laughter and terror, idea and ideology: the limit between these things dissolves, it becomes relative and vaguely perceivable. Being "on the verge" is essentially an "Alice in Wonderland" experience – a situation where nearly anything could happen.[64] And this is precisely where the aspect of the pre-articulated, intuitive, emotive, symbolical, a-rational side of politics becomes particularly important.

Liminality, however, can be understood in more than just a temporal sense. Space can be liminal as well, as can be rituals, objects, mythological characters, etc.[65] Essentially, liminality is a mode of existence, a kind of being, which, it will be argued, can characterise the post-USSR space and provide the framework for better understanding post-Soviet transitional logics and identity formation processes. The reason it is used in this dissertation is because this particular kind of articulating 'in between-ness' accounts for human experience, which is core to the vision of politics that this dissertation puts forward. It also accounts for the inter-structural, without refusing the existence and importance of social, political and cultural structures.

Truth, authenticity and mask-identity

In his famous essay *The Power of the Powerless*, Vaclav Havel characterised the Czechoslovakia of his times as a '*post-totalitarian* state'.[66] He meant that the lived condition within this state was not typically and directly totalitarian but rather so in an intensified and indirect manner, via ideological confinement, pervading life's every aspect, rendering it a conformist lie: "The post-totalitarian system touches people at every step,

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Liminality," *International Political Anthropology* 2, no. 1 (2009), 5-27; Bjørn Thomassen, Agnese Horvath and Harald Wydra, *Breaking Boundaries: Varieties of Liminality* (New York: Berghahn, 2015).

[62]Thomassen, *Uses and Meanings of Liminality*, 5-27

[63]*Ibid*., 13.

[64]Szakolczai, *Liminality and Experience: Structuring Transitory Situations and Transformative Events*, 141-172

[65] Bjørn Thomassen presented a systematic description of the various applications of the concept. See Thomassen, *Uses and Meanings of Liminality*, 5-27

[66]Václav Havel, *Living in Truth*, ed. Jan Vladislav (London: Faber and faber, 1990), p. 40.

but it does so with its ideological gloves on. This is why life in the system is so thoroughly permeated with hypocricy and lies".[67]

In opposition to that Havel called for a fundamental change in way of living at a personal level, which he called 'living in truth'. This entailed the refusal of pragmatically-ordered existential conformity within the regime: "In everyone there is some longing for humanity's rightful dignity, for moral integrity, for free expression of being and a sense of transcendence over the world of existence."[68] This is an ecstatic condition, similar to that of Plato's philosopher who sees the true forms in the allegory of the cave. Havel calls for existence within an epiphanic recognition of truth. Even more so, he calls for a polity to be constructed on this existential premise. However Plato already assessed human imperfection and finitude, which would bring an end to his *callipolis*. And still, even if hardly practically feasable because the routinisation of any kind of prolonged existence is a basic human reality, what Havel did offer is a distinction between imitative and participatory political living. Under post-totalitarian conditions it simply meant active political participation and expression of personal political position. But in general it could also be understood as a more human, more truthful, other than routinized and purely calculative or interest-driven existential and political stance.

Havel's description of a post-totalitarian condition is using a Marxist binary between truth and ideology, which was very strongly reflecting the power structure of his times where truth was clearly opposed to ideological lies of the socialist regime. Truth and lie here are both parts of logical dialectics, and to be authentic under such circumstances meant not to surrender one's life to the dominant power of the totalitarian apparatus. However what happens in the ambiguous situation when the post-totalitarian state is gone? How does one live an authentic life without relying on sceptical and defensive approach towards his immediate surroundings? How does one build and maintain the new identity and what is this identity's relation to authenticity? It is these questions that are at the core of post-Soviet existence and dictate different political themes in the context.

Lithuanian language, in addition to the word *tiesa*, which literally translates as truth, also has another word – *tikrovė* – which is closer to true-ness, as in 'true existence'. *Tiesa* is intrinsically connected with language, with truthful speaking, with (finite) intellectual articulation and is therefore logical. *Tikrovė*, however, cannot be said and cannot be fully structured logically. It is ontological truth, a truthful being. Logical *tiesa* is a part of *tikrovė* as much as is the paradox or, indeed, lie (the fact that lie exists is *tikras*, is true). A part of

[67]Ibid., p. 41-45.
[68] Ibid., p. 54.

tikrovė is hidden, another part is revealed. *Tikrovė* can be recognisable, misrecognisable and can transcend cognition at the same time. It is as much a subject of knowledge as it is of faith. It is this ontological *tikrovė*, rather than logical *tiesa* that this dissertation holds at the basis of its articulation of authenticity. However, it is far beyond the scope of this dissertation to discuss the above notion of truth in greater detail, as it is to discuss modernity (and Soviet Union is understood in this dissertation as a radically modern existence). Yet, my research focuses on the formation of a political 'self' under (late) modern circumstances, in a state of crisis and even more so – within a liminal, transitional context. It asks how the process takes place, not whether the identity is true or false. It thus allows for authentic political existence, just like any human existence to be flawed, partially illusional, mythological and not necessarily truthful. An authentic alcoholic can be genuinely such, without having the epiphanic relation to truth (or good, or beauty) as Havel describes it. Yet he can sober up and become a genuine, authentically different person who recognises the truth through a certain process of transformation as well. It is this imperfection of post-Soviet and modern existence that paradoxically makes the condition true and actually there in an ontological sense.[69]

Therefore the proposed importance of transition and the inclusion of human experience into the considerations of political identity require the reconceptualization of identity itself. It needs to both reflect the artificiality of political identity and at the same time the phenomenological embeddedness of those participating in the process of its recognition. In order to emphasize those two aspects, as well as the organic and gradual shift from inauthenticity into adequacy and 'selfhood' through collective experience and political participation, an allegory of a ritual mask will be used, as discussed by Alessandro Pizzorno and Arpad Szakolczai.[70]

The derivative concept that this dissertation will introduce is *mask-identity*, which will be used for tackling the question of authenticity of political identity under the post-Soviet conditions. It will signify the a-rational, intellectual construct, a partially-articulated (symbolical) product of an imperfect and finite human mind, which, both intentionally and unintentionally makes factographic mistakes, generalisations, associations and interpretations with regards to the surrounding world and itself. It involves emotionally-infused social imaginaries that constantly emerge out of various political events, narratives

[69]However it must be emphasized that this dissertation holds the classical principle of the convertibility of truth, beauty and goodness to be the paramount ontological principle. The problem is that it is not *a priori* human. It can be attained, approached, and recognised, through a living process, just the same as it can be misrecognised, lost from 'vision' or otherwise negated without disappearing ontologically.

[70]Alessandro Pizzorno, "The Mask: An Essay," *International Political Anthropology* 3, no. 1 (2010), 5-28; Árpád Szakolczai, "Masks and Persons: Identity Formation in Public," *International Political Anthropology* 3, no. 2 (2010), 171-191.

that we tell about ourselves as well as dreams and ideals that we associate with that which unites us. It is as grounded in factuality as it is fictional.[71] It will be argued that actually the second becomes the first through the process of political participation. The authentic identity 'grows' through history, assimilating new identity masks layer upon layer, actualising the imaginary. An identity mask becomes authentic selfhood when it is no longer reflected upon, when it comes naturally, when it is not only part of the reflected, but more importantly of the experience.[72] This growth is probably constant, but sometimes it has critical, liminal states.

The concept of *authenticity*, has been discussed in numerous philosophical works. Apart from texts by existentialists like Martin Heidegger, Søren Kierkegaard and Jean-Paul Sartre, the concept had been used and analysed by many other authors. Charles Guignon demonstrates the wide range of its interpretations.[73] He describes various contexts in which the concept has been used recently, starting with contemporary quasi-religious 'self-help movement', and ending with various academic discussions. Lionel Trilling explains the difference between personal authenticity and social sincerity. He demonstrates the historical emergence of these two ideas in various sources of literature throughout the modern times and discusses their relation and difference.[74]

Authenticity in this context means an existential situation of being oneself, which includes imperfection, misrecognition and fictional nature of self-articulation as well as truth. The Lithuanian language has two translations for the word 'identity'. One is *identitetas*, which is a direct translation from Latin *identitas*, and the other is *tapatybė*, which semantically has a different meaning. The latter term itself is not very old, yet quite important due to its linguistic implication. Whilst identity means a set of qualities by which one is identified by others or identifies oneself with, *tapatybė* derives from the words *tas*, meaning 'that', and *pats* meaning 'own' or 'self', giving it a slightly different semantic charge. It asks about whom one actually is existentially, rather than what one is in a nominalist sense. This nuance is crucial, as it implies a personalist rather than nominalist inquiry into the actual,

[71] A good example of a *mask-identity* becoming an authentic existential identity is the case of Pravyi Sektor, a Ukrainian right-winged organisation that emerged during the Maidan protests in late 2013 and early 2014. Apart from being famous for literally wearing balaklava masks, it also demonstrates how a man-made, artificial construct, a jargon turns into a kind of selfhood that substantiates both the participant's existence at the most profound level (members die under the Pravyi Sektor flag) and actual politics both locally (the organisation played an important role in defending against former president Yanukovich's repression) and internationally (it became a 'bogeyman', successfully used by Russian propaganda to discredit the Ukrainian struggle in Maidan).

[72] A famous Japanese novelist Kobo Abe, in his 'Face of Another' depicts a similar process, when a protagonist changes existentially through wearing a self-made mask in public. See Kobo Abe, *Face of Another* (New York: Random House, 2011).

[73]Charles Guignon, *On being Authentic* (London: Routledge, 2004).

[74]Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974).

existential *selfhood*. Theoretically, this dichotomy implies a possibility of having an authentic and inauthentic identity, whether it is intentional or not.

The 'problem' with the concept of authenticity is that if understood in a certain way, it implies intrinsic immanence in terms of *selfhood,* which can be seen as essentialist and thus, when put in a political context, as feeding into nationalist ideas of *volkgeist* and national purity. Alternatively it can lead to considerations about individualised subjectivity. This is what Adorno criticised in Heidegger's work.[75] This understandable association in the Western social imaginary, however, is but one way of thinking about the question. Authenticity can also be understood as a constantly present part of the self, it is the bit that is unreflected and native to the self. With a society living through history, this authenticity also grows organically and adapts to the present, assuming new and new layers of what is taken for granted about the self. Adorno's critique of Heidegger's use of the 'jargon of authenticity' is thus circumvented by the concept of mask-identity. Whilst acknowledging the fabricated-ness, mask-like nature of political identity it demonstrates how through participation in this identity, through 'wearing the mask' in human experience, the mask becomes an authentic self. This then merges the rupture between the 'true' and 'false' self and introduces the Platonic dialectics of the self that is hidden and revealed, taken for granted and reflected upon.

Quasi-metaphysics and cynicism

Quasi-metaphysics is another concept that will be used for conceptualising the experiential and intellectual processes in post-Soviet societies. Arūnas Sverdiolas and Tomas Sodeika introduced the concept in the Lithuanian context as early as in 1989.[76] It is interesting to note that these two thinkers noticed a very important phenomenon in the contemporary Lithuanian society even before Lithuania claimed independence. In their article, they demonstrated how Marxism-Leninism influenced Lithuanian society "as a national monopoly doctrine and, what is most important, as the constitutive principle of the whole society".[77]

This influence unfolds at two levels of social life: "at the level of social physics, which is predetermined by interest-related causal relations, and at the teleologically-ordered level of social metaphysics, which is predetermined by value orientations".[78] However, Marxist materialism denies ontological validity of 'social metaphysics', understanding it as ideology and thus as distortion of reality. As a result, whenever discussing the latter,

[75]Theodor Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity* (London: Routledge, 2002).
[76]Sodeika and Sverdiolas, *Gyvenimas Kolboje Ir Tuoj Po To*, 494-499
[77]*Ibid*., 494.
[78]*Ibid*.

materialist thought automatically presupposes the 'real' pragmatic hidden interests supposedly lurking beyond the ideology.[79] This way Marxist materialism in Soviet Union reduced the 'metaphysical' level of social and political action and turned it into what the authors call 'quasi-metaphysical' level of interests.[80]

> Reductive thinking dictates value confusion: no attention is any more paid to their hierarchy; the higher one is subjugated to achieving the lower one. This way the good, the beautiful and the true become tools, which are used in order to protect the society from the asocial behaviour. The ideal of priestly self-denial and serving the other becomes a tool, which helps solving problems related to citizen's medical support; peasant's attachment to his land – a tool to provide food products for the population; spiritual sense of nature – a tool of solving ecological problems; motherly feelings – a tool of assuring a positive demographic condition. National feelings are applied to when asking not to litter and not to cut trolleybus seats. A goal of spiritual revival is being raised instrumentally. Human consciousness is to be filled with values and ideals in the same fashion as one fills shop shelves with goods. A person has to become spiritual in the same fashion, as products have to be of high quality.
>
> Finally, this destructive heritage of social thought – this empty spot left by a reductivist ideology – also affects thinking about the contemporary situation. In effort to grasp the ideals and their functioning in the social consciousness right here and right now, the thought inevitably slides on the plane surfaces of pragmatism and empty desire.[81]

The interesting thing about the text above is that the claims may be as well applied to the contemporary Western society as to the Soviet or post-Soviet one, which shows potential for inquiring into the problems with modernity more broadly, not only the obvious ones with Marxism. This dissertation will seek to go further and talk about non-rational metaphysics, relating the social processes not only to Kantian moral good, but also to religious values and human experience. It will be shown how during liminal periods the political assumes metaphysical, symbolic and religious meanings, which may potentially lead to a false political epistemology and cynicism, so characteristic to post-USSR political culture, all of which will be discussed more explicitly in the sixth and seventh chapters.

Violence and sacrifice

Finally, this dissertation will briefly discuss the topic of violence, insofar as it relates to questions of political identity. For that purpose, I will use works by Rene Girard, as well as Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss.[82] According to the authors, violence and sacrifice are closely related to crisis states. Violence is socially contagious and sacrifice is a logical (if

[79] *Ibid*., 494-95.
[80] *Ibid*., 496.
[81] Sodeika and Sverdiolas, "Gyvenimas kolboje ir tuoj po to", p. 498.
[82] Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1977); Rene Girard, *The Scapegoat* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function* (London: Cohan & West, 1964).

not successful) means of purification. This dissertation will suggest that under uncontrolled liminal conditions, however, the purification does not function, and the contagion spreads becoming a part of the (political) culture. In the post-USSR context, it reveals itself in two main forms: ethnic violence and self-victimization.

The phenomenon is political identity-related in that it establishes narratives, images and entire political cosmologies, based on violent and sacrificial mechanisms. Being contagious in nature the *sacrificial mechanisms* that Girard talks about become a part of post-Soviet political identity mask, either demonizing the mythological 'other' or sacrificing the 'self' as a result. Such anthropological approach to conflict and identity formation can lead to new explanations for ethnic, religious and other scapegoat-based violence in the region. Several of these explanations will be discussed in chapter six of this dissertation.

1.5 Method

This dissertation builds on my bachelor thesis, which focused on Lithuanian identity formation during the collapse of the Soviet Union. The thesis covered the personal reflections of contemporary intellectuals, who were the main driving force behind the independence movement. It analysed the reflections on the ongoing events and meaning of Lithuanian identity in the country's contemporary cultural press. I studied over a hundred selected articles from four different weekly and monthly cultural journals (*Šiaurės Atėnai, Literatūra ir menas, Švyturys* and *Sietynas*), published between 1988 and 1992.

The thesis concluded that Lithuanian post-Soviet identity has been forming within the *liminal* period of transition and that it has been infused with different meanings and images which emerged from the experience. Some of these experiences and articulations led to new forms of political existence while others worked in schismatic fashion, dividing the society from within. My previous research also demonstrated how during this period the political reality was perceived as being not only political but also existential. Some elements of this image of political reality were expressed in religious or metaphysical terminology (the "Antichrist level" of KGB, "Christian Europe", etc.). In this metaphysically-infused and polarised world perception, post-USSR Lithuanian identity began to take shape.

This dissertation continues the inquiry into human experience as the basis for political identity formation. However it expands the theme in many different directions. Historically, it discusses the Lithuanian case in a much broader perspective. In chapters

two and three, it traces the history of Lithuanian political identity from the first historical mentioning of Lithuania's name to the present day. Contextually, it expands the field of inquiry to other post-USSR cases (Ukraine, Russia, Poland, Estonia, among others). The scope of inquiry is limited mainly to Eastern Europe, in order to be able to better assess the importance of religion and culture to the processes in question.

Methodically, the dissertation also uses visual analysis (of photographs, filmed material, drawings, graffiti, protesters' banners, etc.), historical analysis in case of Lithuanian political identity formation, ten unstructured interviews done in Kyiv in February 2014, along with textual analysis of internet articles on the ongoing events in Lithuania, Ukraine, Russia, Poland and other post-USSR states. It also uses an empathic understanding as a way to access human experience, which will be discussed in the next sub-section.

Finally, instead of case studies, the thesis emphasizes the theoretical and analytical aspect of understanding political identity formation. For this purpose, it uses a wide range of above-mentioned anthropological and philosophical concepts in order to conceptualize the matter emphasizing human experience, without negating the importance of both political factuality and intellectual reflection.

Capturing experience: Empathy as a method

Human experience as a research topic poses several challenges. The first challenge is that experience is often considered entirely subjective and inaccessible for an outsider, as it is impossible fully to imagine or 'put oneself into someone else's shoes'. Secondly, the specificity of human experience requires that it be captured instantly and with as little mediation as possible, via interviews, live recordings or other media, because the impression of the experience gradually wears off with time. Thirdly, even though it is apparent without much deeper analysis that collective experiences are possible (otherwise cultural phenomena such as public commemorations would make no sense), how is it possible to say that an experience is shared, i.e. collective in a particular political setting?

In relation to the first problem, this dissertation is based on a particular interpretation of what empathy is. Instead of understanding it as an act of imagination, it offers a conception of empathy as recognition and understanding. As this dissertation will show, such interpretation proves to be a rather fruitful means of inquiry when addressing the topic of human experience and its relation to politics. Victor Turner, whose structural analysis of *liminality* this dissertation draws upon, had been developing an anthropological theory,

based both on experience, performance and social drama.[83] A lot of his work relates the ritual process, theatre, experience and critical, transformative social/political events. As Victor Turner puts it, "[e]xperience must be linked with performance for there to be transformation. Meaning is generated in transformative process as its main fruit".[84] Therefore political transformation and the human experience of this transformation have meaning, which emerges through performative participation. To empathise with people's experience is to understand this meaning.

Rudolf Makkreel, basing his argument on Dilthey's hermeneutics, discusses the topic of empathy, criticising the idea that to empathise with someone is a simulative act. Instead, he suggests a Diltheyan notion of *Verstehen* when addressing the question of inter-subjectivity.[85] According to him, to empathise with another means to extend self-understanding to others. Dilthey uses the term *Mitfühlen*, meaning co-feeling or feeling together with someone else: "[t]o feel with or sympathise with does not demand a loss of self and is therefore more compatible with understanding. […] Dilthey relates the method of understanding less to feelings such as empathy and sympathy than to a process of re-experiencing (*Nacherleben*) that can structurally exposit what has been understood in temporal terms".[86] Therefore, when we empathise, instead of imitating a mental or emotional state of another in our imagination, we recognise the human condition of another and experience it together.

The claim rests on the specificity of method that, according to Dilthey, lies at the core of human sciences. In the introductory chapter of one of his late essays, he writes that

> The method pervading human sciences is that of understanding and interpretation. All the functions and truths of the human sciences are gathered in understanding. At every point it is understanding that opens up the world. On the basis of lived experience and self-understanding and their constant interaction, there emerges the understanding of other persons and their manifestations of life.[87]

Such conceptualisation of empathic understanding is platonic in nature. Hans-Georg Gadamer develops the theme of inter-subjective understanding further, describing the

[83] See Victor Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1988).
[84]Victor Turner, *On the Edge of the Bush: Anthropology of Experience*, ed. Edith Turner (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985), p. 206.
[85]Rudolf Makkreel, 'From Simulation to Structural Transposition: A Diltheyan Critique of Empathy and Defense of Verstehen', in Empathy and Agency: The Problem of Understanding in the Human Sciences, eds. Hans Herbert Kögler and Karsten Stueber (Oxford: Westview Press, 2000), pp. 181-193.
[86]*Ibid*., pp. 182-183.
[87]Wilhelm Dilthey, 'The Understanding of Other Persons and their Manifestations of Life', in *Selected Works. Volume II: The Formation of the Historical World in Human Sciences*, eds. Rudolf Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi, Vol. 3 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 226-241, quote at.p. 226.

methodical knowledge itself as derivative from the hermeneutic truth.[88] This renders empathy re-cognitive, as it implies the recognition of the truth-in-form about human experience of others when observing one's own human condition. This way, it is an inter-subjective structural transposition instead of inventive/imaginary act that lies at the core of the act of empathising.

However, as a research method empathy as it has been explained above is somewhat limited by two issues. First of all, it requires certain qualities from the observer or the one who empathises. As Gadamer would say, it requires an adequate horizon as the source of reference for understanding.[89] Gadamer uses the term in the context of reading a historical text, but a similar demand has to be raised upon the 'reader' of human experience as well. For this matter, my own position as an author is useful, as I am personally directly related to some of the events that this dissertation is analysing, which will be discussed below. Another issue with empathising is not only that a reader has to have a certain 'experiential horizon', but also a certain contextual understanding of a particular situation he is interpreting. For example, "[w]hen I see tears in a woman's eyes I should not just assume that she is sad. Only by understanding the tears in relation to a contextual situation can I hope to determine whether they are tears of sorrow or tears of joyful relief".[90] This is why this dissertation transcends the hermeneutic and empathic method, incorporating it with others mentioned above, such as historical and visual analysis.

Visuality and experience

With respect to the second question, if it is indeed possible to access the experiences of others through understanding, then this shifts the notion of capturing experience from representing them in imitative fashion to recognising them. This, in turn, allows for using various different media to transfer recognisable information. One of the strongest and most recognisable human senses is the ability to perceive and to see. Therefore, through looking at contemporary photography, filmed as well as other visual material, in addition to different narratives offered by the people who participated in the events in question, human experiences become even better recognisable and understandable.

In case of Maidan, long unstructured interviews were performed, inquiring into people's experiences, thoughts and explanations for the current situation. However due to the time

[88] In *Truth and Method*, besides scientist and naturalist methods of attaining knowledge Gadamer raises the importance of art and play, which are not methodical but rather hermeneutic and experiential in their nature. See Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed. (London: Continuum, 2006). It also involves inter-subjective recognition of shared experiential truth.
[89] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*,.
[90] Makkreel, *From Simulation to Structural Transposition: A Diltheyan Critique of Empathy and Defense of Verstehen*, eds. Kögler and Stueber (Oxford: Westview Press, 2000), pp. 181-193, quote at p.182.

gap it was not possible to do the same in case of *sąjūdis*. The thesis therefore used the textual material gathered as part of my bachelor thesis, adding the ever-growing body of literature on the topic in form of both academic and personal retrospective reflections (which should always be used with some causion, as they can represent reflected and mythologised memory instead of human experience).

But most importantly, this dissertation uses nearly thirty photography albums as well as several films capturing different layers of historical events discussed. The latter material was gathered during my internship in Lithuanian Culture Research Institute in Vilnius in September 2014. In addition to that, I obtained access to a personal photography archive of a Lithuanian photographer, Juozas Kazlauskas, who participated and documented the *January events*.[91] In addition, the dissertation uses various caricatures pictures and graffiti pieces, seeing them as iconographic representations of political imagination and human experience of those participating and/or reflecting on the events. These were found in contemporary literature, on the actual sites of *sąjūdis* and Maidan, on the internet and other places. Finally, I use my own photographs for various purposes, such as to illustrate or emphasize the experiential side of what is being discussed.

Author's position in relation to the work

The last question that was put forward in relation to capturing experience is whether experiences discussed are truly collective and to what extent. In response, it is important to discuss my own position in relation to the object of study. I am Lithuanian and although I was very young at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, I experienced the post-Soviet transition in Lithuania first-hand. This provided me with direct experience of liminality when the society was (and still is) trying to redefine itself as non-Soviet. My situation in relation to the topic gave important insights into experiential meanings and associative undertones of different cultural forms, such as caricatures, jokes, folklore, certain post-Soviet common knowledge, etc. It also provided general knowledge of pertinent debates in the society regarding Lithuanian political identity. This was useful when picking the important images and historical episodes to discuss in chapters two and three. Finally, it allowed me better to understand other post-USSR Eastern European cultures and finer nuances in other country's debates, insofar as they were in some way related to common Soviet history.

[91] The *January Events* took place on 13 January 1991 in Vilnius, when crowds of unarmed Lithuanians defended the newly-gained independence from the Soviet Army's effort to regain power. See chapter four for more details.

It was this personal experience that allowed me to recognise patterns in political behaviour across the Lithuanian political culture as well as internationally, and recognise the commonality of some said patterns (common images, verbal expressions, historical references, attitudes, etc.). However empirically the visual material also helped to demonstrate this collectivity. Often political claims and images discussed in articles and in public generally appeared in photographs written on political banners, stickers on walls, in caricatures, etc. They recur in different locations, in different contexts which indicate a certain continuity of same images, narratives and experiences. As an insider, it was easier to notice and capture those. And even though it is impossible to strictly demark the 'borders', in which this or that image or this or that political cosmology is commonly accepted, there is ample evidence that they exist, they are being related to and continuously form politics.

However, the challenge with being an 'insider' arose when I had to communicate the local common knowledge to the Western European audience. A lot of contextual nuances had to be explained in detail for images to start making sense. However the richness and scale of meaning often got lost in translation, so these images could never be captured fully both in another language and translated to another political cosmology in their entirety. Nevertheless, it was my intention to remain impartial when evaluating the political processes discussed in the thesis. Therefore I use foreign historians as main sources of information when discussing Lithuanian history. In a similar fashion, I try to depict all sides of the international disagreement regarding Maidan. Even though having seen it first hand and seeing the horrible distortions of factuality when represented by first of all the Russian but also Western media, it was extremely challenging to maintain a largely objective position.

All things considered, it were these particular aspects of political reality that I recognised as being recurrent and common in the actual society that directed me to investigate particular literary and visual sources. As discussed above, human experience is recognisable and it sublimates in different cultural and political forms. When the context is being known, it is possible to understand these human experiences and recognise how they influence politics and identity formation. However it is difficult to verbally capture, translate and explain these experiences entirely as some meanings are either too abstract or get lost in translation.

1.5 Structure

This chapter is an introductory overview of the entire project. It introduces the topic, sets forth the problem and research questions, positions the research within the existing literature, discusses the theoretical approach the project assumes and a list of concepts and methods that the dissertation employs. The next three chapters inductively develop a new theoretical framework for understanding political identity formation, critically analysing the main case of Lithuania. Chapters five and six demonstrate the applicability of the theory to other post-USSR cases and outlines the spectrum of inquiry that the suggested approach is capable of addressing. The last chapter should be seen as an extended conclusion of the dissertation, where the argument is reviewed and summarized at the problematic, structural and theoretical levels. I will now discuss the contents of each chapter separately.

Chapter 2

The chapter consists of two main parts, divided chronologically: the pre-modern and modern Lithuanian history, the figurative historical point of division being the collapse of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, or *Rzeczpospolita*. This division was chosen because of the radical qualitative change in Lithuanian political identity at the time and in order to emphasize the importance of modernity to the contemporary Lithuanian political identity, which manifested at all levels of human life, from political to intellectual and experiential. It is aimed at understanding the structure and logics of the Lithuanian historical narrative and thus its post-Soviet political cosmology, which is discussed in chapter three. It also reveals the often unrecognised destructive effect that the Soviet experience has had, thus justifying the a-rational motivations for the struggle for the post-Soviet independence in 1987-1991 discussed in the fourth chapter.

Chapter 3

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. In terms of material it seeks to discuss the theme of Lithuanian political identity at the intellectual level, with the main focus on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Lithuanian history. As for the overall theory, this chapter demonstrates that politics and especially identity-related politics are infused with symbolism and mythological meanings. Therefore, the chapter is used to develop new conceptual tools for the wanted understanding of the theme. The title used for capturing the unique embedded existence of a particular society, which includes the mentioned a-rational factors, is *political cosmology*. Three manifestations in terms of popular *images*,

intellectual articulation and the emergence of political *mask-identity* through embedded human experience are being discussed.

Chapter 4

The chapter consists of four sections, which analyse the case of Lithuanian independence movement from various angles. First it discussed the economic, political, cultural and other external factors. Secondly, it shows how the loss of perceived boundaries between social and political structures coupled with various other experiences, such as victimization and *liminal* ambiguity, gave way for the powerful, emotionally charged images to emerge. The third section explores these images, namely, those of the 'East' and the 'West', and shows how they became representative of more than the political situation, but also gain different quasi-metaphysical associative meanings. The final section discusses how this metaphysically-infused image of the political self was confirmed as the new mask-identity of the independent Lithuania and became the new, revived *political persona*.

Chapter 5

The first section of the chapter outlines a broader discussion of *liminality*. It distinguishes and provides examples for three modalities of *liminal* condition: the temporal, the formal and the spatial. The second section compares three different images of three different persons in three culturally and historically most different cases: Poland (a Warsaw Pact state), Estonia (a former Soviet state) and Russia (the central Soviet state). It then demonstrates how in all of the three cases, personalities become mythologised images and serve similar identity-related functions within different political cosmologies. The third section explores a situation where several narratives use same images. It explores the case of Ukrainian protests of 2013-14 in Kyiv and focuses on two most prominent images in the context - those of 'being right-wing' and 'the West'. The section demonstrates how these images are articulated and provide insight intopolitical identities of three parties concerned with the crisis: the West, Russia and pro-Maidan Ukraine.

Chapter 6

In this chapter, three major post-USSR political identity-related problems are discussed, which to different extents and proportions affect every state in the post-USSR region. Accordingly, the chapter is divided into three sections. In relation to these problems, it addresses other important questions of ethnic and political violence, self-victimization, quasi-metaphysical identity formation and political cynicism, underlying post-Soviet political culture. The first section uses the work of René Girard's, Marcel Mauss and Henri Hubert on violence and sacrifice in order to gain deeper insight into the anthropological,

cultural and social factors of violence. The second section continues with this theme while tackling the problem of identity formation under violent circumstances. The final section discusses the topic of political cynicism as well as the discrepancy between form and practice in post-Soviet politics.

Chapter 7

The finalchapter of the dissertation concludes the discussion at three levels. Firstly it answers the questions formulated in the beginning. Secondly, it summarizes the argument throughout the entire dissertation, chapter by chapter. Thirdly, it presents several different problematic themes that the new approach invokes, concluding the theoretical dimension of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 2. Lithuania: history and political identity

2.1 Introduction

Even though the topic of this dissertation is directly related to politics of the post-Soviet era, this chapter will present the main case of this dissertation, in a much broader historical context. The reason for this is firstly because historical narrative is core to political and cultural identity not only in Lithuania, but in the entire post-USSR region as well. As it will be shown in the following chapters, historical narrative provides not only material for the new images and political identities to emerge, but it is also of existential importance – it provides legitimacy for the existence of the post-Soviet Lithuanian 'self' and motivation to defend it.

The name of Lithuania is ancient, and yet it contains different historical meanings. Unlike France or Italy and some other Western countries, what was once medieval Lithuania, or, as it was called, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL), was a completely different political entity culturally, ethnically and linguistically to what modern Lithuania is today. And yet, the history of the GDL is an essential part of the modern Lithuanian, but also Belarussian and to lesser extent - Ukrainian national historical narratives. I will therefore distinguish Lithuanian history into two periods: the pre-modern and the modern, with a breaking point in the late eighteenth century. The latter is very much connected to the former, and that is why this topic is being discussed here.

The chapter will answer three main questions. Firstly, what was the process of formation of these two Lithuanian political identities and what political, social and cultural conditions did they emerge in? Secondly, how did the transition from the first to the second happen in the Russian Empire, and what did it mean for the latter? Finally, how was the modern Lithuanian identity articulated in the interwar Lithuanian Republic from 1918 to 1940 and how did 50 years of Soviet occupation (1940-1990) affect the modern notion of 'Lithuanianness'.

In answering these questions, the chapter intends to first of all introduce a Western European reader to Lithuanian history, which is vaguely discussed and represented internationally. Secondly, it aims to demonstrate the importance of historical narrative and images for political identity formation, be it Lithuanian or post-Soviet in general. Finally, with new political identities forming and post-USSR people attempting to re-define their

political self, based on historical and cultural premises, as it will be demonstrated, history becomes a central issue in the international politics of the region.[92]

The first section of the chapter will present a brief historical overview of the medieval Grand Duchy of Lithuania, from the first mentioning of the name in the eleventh century, to the partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the eighteenth, followed by the formation of Lithuanian modern, national identity under the rule of the Russian Empire. Even though I will mostly concentrate on the Lithuanian narrative, the historical heritage of the GDL actually geographically also covers a broader spectrum of post-Soviet countries, including Estonia, Latvia, Moldova, Poland, Russia, and Ukraine. Apart from the general historical introduction of the GDL, this part also seeks to depict the structural development of Lithuanian political, social and religious life throughout the history, which firstly explains the context for the emergence of Lithuanian modern nationalism in the late nineteenth century.

The second section of the chapter discusses the historical process of the modern Lithuanian political identity formation. It will explorethe period from the late nineteenthtothe twenty-first century, emphasising various historical events and experiential aspects that influenced the Lithuanian self-perception and has been shaping its articulation of political self. The most important events are the creation of Lithuanian Republic, the Soviet occupation and repressions during the Soviet rule, as well as the struggle for independence and the emergence of a restored Lithuanian Republic. The historical narrative that this dissertation presents is aimed at emphasizing the historical themes that reverberate in the later political identity-related intellectual debates and are therefore important for the topic of the dissertation overall.

2.2 The development of Lithuanian political identity before the modern state

History in Eastern and Central Europe is a very complex and politicized topic. It influences both the domestic and international politics. Being ‘stuck’ in between the East and the West, the Asiatic and the European, which is an immanent problematic in the region, it has

[92] For instance, according to the activity report, published by the Lithuanian Department of National Security on 7 June 2013, the Russian and Belarussian governments are conducing digital attacks and information warfare against Lithuania. Two of the main areas of aggressive activity are the negative historical representation of Lithuania, as well as that of its role in various historical processes, and the fostering of ethnically and historically – based disagreements among Lithuanian and other ethnic groups within Lithuania as well as with close territorial and historical neighbours (i.e. Poland). See ‘Rusijos vykdomas karas prieš Lietuvą išvilktas į dienos šviesą [Russian War Against Lithuania Brought Into Daylight],’http://www.lrytas.lt/lietuvos-diena/aktualijos/rusijos-vykdomas-karas-pries-lietuva-isvilktas-i-dienos-sviesa.htm (Last accessed: June 7, 2013).

been in a constant flux for centuries.[93] Even though the latter theme is applicable to a broader area, this chapter will concentrate on the history of that part, which is directly related to the main case of study.

The history of the GDL, which this section will discuss, is still poorly researched, the main reason being that the sources are in ancient *Ruthenian* rather than Latin, but also, because the medieval written sources are relatively scarce and there is ample space for different interpretations of the regional history. It is no surprise that the history of the region has been mostly researched by Lithuanian, Polish and Russian historians, all of whom have their own reservations on the topic. This is because, as mentioned, the historical narratives have important political implications.

Having this in consideration, in effort to present an as much bias-free historical narrative as possible, the dissertation therefore will mainly base thearguments on an outsider perspective. Norman Davies, originally an expert on Polish history, has recently published a book with an entire chapter, dedicated to Lithuania. The work of Timothy Snyder, Richard Mole and Mathias Niendorf will also be used as complementary foreign sources.[94] However, todiscuss the topics that are not covered in the mentioned books, some of the newest works by authoritative Lithuanian historians will be used as well. On the other hand, even though presenting the historical narrative in a chronological order, Historical episodes that are of most importance to the further discussion in this dissertation will be emphasized.

Grand Duchy of Lithuania

The literary historical sources on Lithuanians are rather late. Most of pre-historic (fifth–eighth to early eleventh century) knowledge is supplied by archaeological, linguistic and ethnographic studies. Ethnically Lithuanians belong to the Baltic family of tribes in the region, which is one of the three Indo-European cultures. The others, which arrived in the area much later, are Slavic and Germanic. In general, Indo-Europeans arrived in the pre-Baltic region around the 3rd millennium BC. Geographically Balts inhabited the lands between the upper Volga and Oka rivers and Moscow in the east, the Prypiat and Seim

[93] The significance of being 'stuck in between', and its experiential meaning will be discussed in Chapter 4.
[94]Richard Mole, *The Baltic States from the Soviet Union to the European Union: Identity, Discourseand Power in the Post-Communist Transition of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania*, (London: Routledge, 2012); Mathias Niendorf, *Lietuvos Didžioji Kunigaikštystė: Studija Apie Nacijos Formavimąsi Ankstyvaisiais Naujaisiais Amžiais 1569-1795* [Grand Duchy of Lithuania: A Study on Nation Formation in the Early Modern Era 1569 – 1795], 2010); Norman Davies, *Vanished Kingdoms: The History of Half-Forgotten Europe* (London: Allen Lane, 2011b).; Timothy Snyder, *Tautų Rekonstrukcija: Lietuva, Lenkija, Ukraina, Baltarusija, 1569-1999* [*The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999*], ed. Rimantas Matulis, Antroji laida. ed. (Vilnius: Mintis, 2008).

rivers in the south and the Wysla river in the west.[95] However, out of many Baltic tribes, only Lithuanians and Latvians have survived until the present day. The Lithuanian language remains the most conservative Indo-European language of all that are still spoken nowadays, containing many words from proto-Indo-European.[96]

In terms of literary mentioning, however, the name of Lithuania *(Lituae)* was first mentioned in 1009, in the Quedlinburg annals. However it was not before 1263 that the state of Lithuania was established, as duke Mindaugas united Baltic tribes into the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL), labelling himself the Grand Duke. A variety of factors account for the relative isolation of Baltic lands from the cultural and civilisational developments of the West. First, geographical isolation, as Baltic lands were surrounded by vast dense marshy forests, and the fastest routes connecting them to the Western world were the frozen rivers in winter times, when temperatures could reach -30 C and below. Second, constant wars with neighbours, including the Teutonic Order of the West, the Livonian Order from the North, Mongol-Tartars from the South and, slightly later, Muscovites from the East. Third, the stubborn character of the local population, in the Baltic lands, and later those of GDL, which also included the Orthodox Ruthenian lands that are now called Belarus or White Russia and were larger than the Baltic lands themselves.

In terms of sovereignty, warrior chiefs and dukes (*kunigaikščiai*) as well as other officers of the GDL ruled Lithuanian lands in autocratic fashion, based on personal influence and relationships, not as an institutionalised modern state of the late medieval to early modern West.[97]

An ancient (Baltic) Prussian sanctuary *romuva*, depicted as a tree with gods inside, being worshiped by burning sacrifices, surrounded by town houses. 17th century carving. (*unesco-ci.org*, http://www.unesco-ci.org/photos/showphoto.php/photo/4098/size/big/cat/4,(Last accessed: June 17, 2014).)

[95]Adomas Butrimas, *Baltų Menas* [Art of the Balts] (Vilnius: Vilnius Academy of Arts Press, 2009), 19-29.
[96] Zigmas Zinkevičius, *Rytų Lietuva praeityje ir dabar* [Lithuanian Language in the Past and Now]. (Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidykla, 1993), p. 9.
[97]Rimvydas Petrauskas, "Ankstyvosios Valstybinės Struktūros Lietuvoje XIII Amžiuje – XV Amžiaus Pradžioje," *Lietuvos Istorijos Studijos*, no. 16 (2005), 20.

The Baltic population in the GDL and before that, including most of the nobility and grand dukes, but unlike the Slavic Orthodox population, were traditionally pagan.[98] Lithuanian polytheistic faith was very deeply embedded in the surrounding natural world. This made nature-centred, organic ethics a very important aspect not only of medieval life, but most importantly of the modern Lithuanian identity, reverberating into the nineteenth century's historical narratives, Lithuanian political theories in the interwar period, and even into contemporary times.[99] The Catholic Christianisation of the land took place only in latter part of the fourteenth century, making Lithuania the youngest Christian European land, even though there were earlier unsuccessful efforts to adopt the Catholic faith. Christianisation opened the door for the belated spread of Western cultural and political influences.[100]

Some scholars argue that the choice to Christianise Lithuania was essentially strategically motivated, as the international tensions were very high, particularly because of Lithuania being a pagan land. This was a reason for the Teutonic order to continue attacks on Lithuanians and to prevent the Grand Duke from becoming a king, as all kings had to be confirmed in Rome.

> Orthodoxy would not defend Lithuania from the Teutonic Knights, who treated it as heresy; and Orthodoxy would favor the Slavic boyars in Lithuania, already more numerous and more cultured than Jogaila's Baltic Lithuanian dynasty. The Polish crown and Catholic cross were favorable in both domestic and international policy: they provided a reliable bulwark against the Teutonic Knights, a reliable basis for expansion to the east, and a new source of distinction for Jagiello and his descendants.[101]

[98] The fact that Lithuania was the last European pagan country to turn to Christianity remains an important element in a Lithuanian nationalist narrative, and in an indirect way feeding into an overall alternative culture of various contemporary neo-pagan, neo-traditionalist, neo-conservative movements not only in Eastern and Central Europe, but also in Scandinavia, Russia, the Balkans, etc.

[99] An interesting use of this anti logo-centric naturalist conception of being is presented by one of the most important contemporary Lithuanian philosophers Arvydas Šliogeris. See Arvydas Šliogeris, *Bulvės Metafizika* [Potato's Metaphysics] (Vilnius: Apostrofa, 2010).

[100] This is not to say, however, that Lithuanians had no earlier contacts with the outer world. Baltic tribes have been mentioned by Tacitus as early as 98AD, and, possibly, even by Herodotus himself.SeeGintaras Beresnevičius, *Lietuvių Religija Ir Mitologia* [Lithuanian Religion and Mythology] (Vilnius: Tyto Alba, 2004), 10-22.Lithuanians had contact with the outer world first of all through battles, but also through trade, arriving missionaries and diplomats. They had no writing; therefore scribes from Kyiv Russ would be hired to perform administrative tasks. This was the reason why most of Lithuanian written sources had been written in Ruthenian. However, Norman Davies, argues differently. According to him, because there are no governmental written texts remaining in Lithuanian language, and because Ruthenian was the language of politics and government, Lithuanian must have been used only by peasantry and ethnic Lithuanian nobility, but only for domestic, or, starting with the 16th century, also for religious purposes. (Norman Davies, *Europe. A History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1997), 228.) The later version, if understood in a shallow manner, may argue heavily in favour of the Belarussian nationalist historical narrative. It is not my aim here to decide who is right. However this illustrates the point, put forth in the introduction of this chapter: that different interpretations of the same factual history exist, and that they heavily influence the local identity politics of post-Soviet countries.

[101]Snyder, *Tautų Rekonstrukcija : Lietuva, Lenkija, Ukraina, Baltarusija, 1569-1999*, 18.

Secondly, the other option for Christianisation was to accept the Eastern Orthodox faith, which would have meant surrendering Lithuania to Muscovite influence.[102] And wars with Muscovites had been ongoing for decades.[103]

However, since the process of Christianisation in terms of physically christening the entire population of men (not women) was official, large scale and rapid, the local population practically remained pagan for many decades to come until a functional enough ecclesiastic network had been established. Nonetheless, Lithuania became officially a Christian land, which was a direct prerequisite and consequence of the Grand Duke Jogaila's (in Polish, Władysław II Jagiełło) marriage with Queen Jadwiga of Poland. Before the marriage, in 1385, a Union of Krėva was signed, which meant that:

> The pagan religion of Lithuanian elite was prohibited […]. Henceforth, Roman Catholicism became the official religion of court circles in Vilnius, and increasingly of the more ambitious gentry. Adopted by substantial minority of the grand duchy's population, it existed in uneasy cohabitation with the Byzantine Orthodox of the majority. At the same time, traditional political culture was undermined. In theory, the grand duke lost none of his autocratic powers; in practice, he was obliged to grant wide privileges to influential subjects, who quickly learned the habits of their more rebellious Polish counterparts.[104]

Thus, Jogaila became King of Poland and the Grand Duke of the Catholic Christian GDL. Historians commonly agree on this being a starting point for Lithuania's westernisation (through religion) and polonisation (through political culture). In 1401, Jogaila bestowed the title of Grand Duke of Lithuania upon his cousin Vytautas.

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[102] When talking about Catholic christianisation, I mean that of the ruler, and, consequently, of its people. However, "unlike the monarchs of the age, the grand dukes of Litva [Lithuania], not being Christians, naturally exhibited no special preference between Catholicism and Orthodoxy, and they married their daughters to Catholic or to Orthodox princes as convenience dictated", in Davies, *Vanished Kingdoms: The History of Half-Forgotten Europe*, 253.

[103] Even though the state that in the fourteenth century has evolved into the Grand Duchy of Moscow is now being popularly called Russia, one has to differentiate it from a much older Kyivan Rus' or Ruthenia, with Moscow at that time being a periphery and Kyiv being the capital. Even in the sixteenth century, the Orthodox Christians of GDL "[…] formed a heavy majority of the population. They adhered to the traditional Slavonic liturgy of Kyivan Rus', not to the 'Russian Orthodoxy' that was enforced beyond the eastern border. […] The ideology of the 'Third Rome' no doubt seemed far-fetched to many non-Muscovites, since it was saying, in effect, that the grand duchy had no legitimacy. […] The message received little or no support among White Russians and Ukrainians, who valued their political separation and their religious liberty, but from Moscow's point of view it provided a consistent and convenient *casus belli*. […] Ivan III began the campaign to recover the lands of Rus' in 1485. It would proceed, with intervals, for three centuries", when the Russian Empire, along with Prussia and Austria divided and annexed the devastated Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in three steps from 1772 to 1795. *Ibid.*, 265-267.

[104] *Ibid*., 255.

Under the rule of Grand Duke Vytautas, the territory of the GDL reached its largest capacity, spanning from the Baltic Sea to the Black. This period is seen as the golden age in the popular Lithuanian national narrative, and has a strong emotional charge for the modern Lithuanian historical romanticism. (Monika Petrulienė, Išleistas vadovas po LDK [A Guide on GDL Published], *voruta.lt*, http://www.voruta.lt/isleistas-vadovas-po-ldk/ (Last accessed on 17 June 2014).

In 1410, united Polish and Lithuanian forces, lead by the both cousins, in Grünwald Battle near Tannenberg, broke down the Teutonic Order, which despite Lithuania's christianisation, had been continuing attacks on Lithuanian lands. After the battle, however, the Order failed to recover. This is one of the most important dates and an object of national pride in popular Lithuanian narrative. It has been particularly important for the country during the interwar period, but has not lost its emotional appeal nowadays either.

Gentry estate as a political nation

In 1413, the Pact of Hrodło re-established Polish-Lithuanian political relations. The pact marked certain changes within the GDL in terms of sovereignty, social structure and power distribution. First of all, it stated "[…] that the Polish lords should participate in the electoral confirmation of the Lithuanian Grand Duke. […] The Polish nobility were obtaining a permanent stake in the internal affairs of their partners: the Lithuanians were receiving a guarantee of the separate identity of their state".[105] However, should Jogaila die, the new king would not be elected without Vytautas's consent either. Secondly, the rights and duties of Lithuanian officers, noblemen and gentry were formally established.[106] Many Catholic noblemen and gentry were accepted under 47 Polish coats of arms along with internationally recognised privileges.[107]

The pact also marked the rise of some of the most powerful noble families in Lithuania as well as of the decentralisation of power in the GDL, as the gentry, through series of grants and privileges, given by series of elected future rulers, became more and more influential. This was the actual formal creation of Lithuanian political nation. From the Hrodło pact,

[105]Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland*, Vol. 1 (London: Penguin Books, 2011a), 119-121.
[106]Darius Kuolys, *Res Lituana: Kunigakštystės Bendrija* [Res Lituana: The Community of the Dutchy] (Vilnius: Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore, 2009), 63-65.
[107]Nelė Asadauskienė, ed., *Lietuvos Didikai* [Lithuanian Nobility] (Kaunas: Šviesa, 2011), 8.

one can start talking about actual legal citizenship in Lithuania, a republican governmental form with an elected grand duke, and the emergence of Lithuanian gentry, which, along with the nobility, constituted the Lithuanian citizenry (but represented less than 10% of the general population).

Even though since the early fifteenth century Polish gentry (*szlachta*) and Western culture, primarily in form of Catholicism, gained ever more importance and influence in the internal political life of the GDL, the administrative organization remained separate and autonomous.[108] In 1522, in order to modernise the administration, the first Lithuanian Statute was written later followed by two others.[109] It was mainly based on Lithuanian customary laws, but was also influenced by the ancient code of Kievan Rus' as well as Polish law. The latter especially influenced the parts related to the rights and political powers of the ever-growing gentry estate, which constituted the citizenry of the soon-to-be Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The statutes kept defining the inner administrative proceedings of the GDL after merging with Poland, and some parts – even after having been annexed by the Russian Empire.

Rzeczpospolita: the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth

The Union with Poland took place in 1569, and happened for various reasons, including the ambitions of the Lithuanian gentry to obtain equal rights compared with those enjoyed by the Polish gentry as well as unsuccessful wars with Muscovites. Much of the Lithuanian nobility was strongly opposed to the union, as it would mean the abolition of Lithuanian autonomy and even greater Polish influence on the inner affairs of the GDL. However, Sigismund-August, the then king of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania, under pressure

[108] It is worth a mention that from mid-sixteenth to mid-seventeenth century, slightly later than in the rest of Europe, Lithuania was also a battleground for religious struggles of the Reformation and the Counter-reformation. The royal religion remained Catholic, and the reformation, having arrived from Prussia, was spread by an increasing part of nobility, pioneered by Radvila the Black. However, the Protestants did not reach a critical number nor did they manage to maintain influence in the Dutchy. Armed conflicts between the Portestant and the Catholic Lithuanian nobility also occured. In order to counteract the spread of Protestantism, especially in terms of education, since the Protestant gymnasium had been already established, Valerijonas Protasevičius, the bishop of Vilnius, invited the Jesuit order. In 1570, the order also established a gymnasium, which in 1579 was acknowledged as Vilnius University. It was the easternmost university at the time, and had played a fundamental role in the factory of Counter-reformation. See Vytautas Ališauskas, *Krikščionybės Lietuvoje Istorija* [*The History of Christianity in Lithuania*] (Vilnius: Aidai, 2006).,149-263. According to Virginijus Savukynas, it is in mid-seventeenth century that religious confession became an indicator of Polish and Lithuanian identity, as opposed to Protestantism and, indeed, Orthodox Christianity. See: Vladimiras Laučius. "Viginijus Savukynas: Net Vincas Kudirka gėdijosi savo lietuviškai kalbančių tėvų [Even Vincas Kudirka Was Embarassed by His Lithuanian-speaking Parents]", *15min.lt*, http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/ziniosgyvai/interviu/virginijus-savukynas-net-vincas-kudirka-gedijosi-savo-lietuviskai-kalbanciu-tevu-599-294767(Last accessed: 2 March 2013).

[109]The Second Lithuanian Statute was written in 1529, and the third one as late as in 1588, after the union of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania into a Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. The Lithuanian statute remained a guideline document for the administration of Lithuanian lands even after the Commonwealth was annexed. The document was abolished by the Russian Imperial government in 1840.

of the influential Polish nobility, initiated the merging of the two countries into a Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth or *Rzeczpospolita*:

> There was to be […] one invisible body-politic; one king, elected not born; one currency and one *Sejm* [parliament], whose deputies were to form the state's most powerful institution. The Lithuanians were to keep their own law, their own administration, their own army, and the titles of their princely families. […] As it was, the grand duchy played a junior role in the Polish-Lithuanian partnership. Yet it possessed a guarantee of internal inviolability, and its representatives could participate in full in both the common *Sejm* and the royal elections. The so-called Noble Democracy gave the great Lithuanian lords inordinate influence.[110]

The topic of the union (signed in Lublin, Poland) has been a matter of various debates both in contemporary Lithuanian and foreign academic discussions. Indeed, after the union, and during the existence of *Rzeczpospolita*, the changes, both political and cultural, were fairly profound. Culturally, Lithuanian upper estates became ever more polonised.

According to Davies,

> In 1696, on Sobieski's death, the official language of the grand duchy's administration was changed from *ruski* [ancient Ruthenian] to Polish. The change marked the point where the ruling nobility had become so Polonized that the grand duchy's principal native language was no longer readily intelligible to the upper classes and to the bureaucracy.[111]

International tensions grew continuously in scale and intensity. Since the death of Sigismund-August, the last of the Jagiellons, the Polish-Lithuanian nobility and gentry had elected thirteen other kings, all foreigners, many of whom reigned for fairly short periods of time. It eventually also became a custom that every newly elected king should grant the Lithuanian gentry and nobility ever broader rights and freedoms, which greatly expanded their influence. This paralysed the country's centralised government, with elected monarchs either fighting wars outside, or generally not taking any interested in the Commonwealth's affairs (as it was the case during the so called Saxon era) if only to use its funds for other political affairs, preventing crucial domestic decisions from being made on time.

Starting with the second part of the seventeenth century, the gentry's estate began abusing their infamous right of veto (*liberum veto*), often being manipulated or patronised by an interested party of the conflicting nobility.[112] This political impotence was arguably one of the most profound factors that paved the way for the absolute devastation of the

[110]Davies, *Vanished Kingdoms*, 272-274.
[111]*Ibid*., 282.
[112]*Liberum veto* allowed each and any member of the gentry to unilaterally stop the law from being passed at any moment of the *Sejm* assembly.

Commonwealth. It manifested as an internal legislative paralysis, which is often popularly called the 'anarchy of gentry'.

The final nail to the coffin for the Commonwealth proved to be the foreign political situation. The seventeenth century had been marked by numerous wars with Muscovites and Swedes, as well as the uprising Cossacks in Ukraine. This weakened the Commonwealth greatly, as did the internal conflicts between the factions of nobility and careless rule of numerous foreign kings. "The reign of Jan Sobieski (1673-96) is most often viewed, especially by outsiders unfamiliar with internal affairs, as the last grand flourish of Polish – Lithuanian power and glory". However,

> While the king-grand duke battled the Turks on the Danube, the Sapieha faction battled the Pac faction in the grand duchy, and all semblance of co-ordinated government broke down. In itself, the breakdown was not terminally destructive – the *Rzeczpospolita* had recovered from similar episodes before – but the timing was fatal. The grand duchy was paralyzed at a juncture when Swedish – Muscovite rivalry was coming to a head in the adjoining lands; any major war between Sweden's Baltic Empire and Muscovy was bound to see the grand duchy trampled in between the two.[113]

The slow withering of the country resulted in the three-staged partition of the country among the neighbouring Prussia, Austria and Russian Empire in the late eighteenth century.[114] The lands of the GDL fell under the Russian Imperial rule.

> They were declared, quite falsely, to have been reunited with the ancient Russian homeland, from which, supposedly, they had once been torn away. […] After the Russian Empire's annexation of the grand duchy, all the historic administrative structures were replaced by centralized *gubernias* or 'governorships', which took their orders from the tsarist government in St. Petersburg. […] The entire nomenclature has changed. Russian names took the place of Polish names, and map-makers round the world came to terms with 'Western Russia' or 'the North-western Gubernias'. The old names of 'Lithuania' and 'Belarus' were banished. 'White Ruthenia' was presented as 'White Russia', and an international treaty was signed to suppress the name of Poland forever. [… However,] the existing laws were too extensive and too firmly established to be replaced wholesale or overnight. Russian decrees were introduced gradually, and sections of the old Lithuanian Statutes remained in force for decades. Yet another area where radical change was introduced quickly pertained to the status of the nobility. They had elected the monarch, governed the localities, convened regional assemblies and enjoyed the rights to own land and to bear arms. Such 'Golden Freedoms' were unthinkable in the tsarist autocracy, so early in the 1790s the privileges of the grand duchy's nobility were arbitrarily restricted.[115]

[113] *Ibid*., 281-282.
[114] *Ibid*., 286.
[115] *Ibid*., 290-293.

Even though the role of the Lithuanian nobility diminished, the gentry estate maintained its political influence in the lands as well as the cultural identity of the former Commonwealth's citizenry. In a very Romantic fashion, they actually saw themselves as citizens of a non-existent state. There was no division between the Lithuanians and the Polish gentry on linguistic grounds, as by that time all the estate has been nearly entirely polonised. Polish had already become an official public language, which was first of all spoken in the Catholic Church, but it was also the literary, scientific language, the prestigious one. Lithuanian, on the other hand, was a rustic language, spoken at home, in the fields (one has to bear in mind that peasants constituted a vast majority of Lithuanian population, 93% among ethnic Lithuanians by 1897).[116] Jewish, Russians and Poles predominantly populated the cities. As Balkelis notices, this also means that at the time there was no Lithuanian middle class whatsoever either.[117] The city of Vilnius became a cultural hub for Lithuanian nationalist movement only in the early 20th century.[118]

The factor that made the Lithuanian gentry properly Lithuanian was the place of birth and the inherited lands in the GDL and Lithuanian blood.[119] However their political nationhood was Polish. One of the most celebrated Polish-Lithuanian romantic poets of the time, who never wrote a word in Lithuanian, was Adam Mickiewicz. Same as many other romanticism-influenced gentry of the epoch, he described himself as *gente lituanus, natione polonus* (a Lithuanian by kinship, a Pole by nationhood), and his famous phrase from his poem "Pan Tadeusz" exclaims: "*Litwa! Ojczyzno moja!Ty jesteś jak zdrowie. / Ile cię trzeba cenić, ten tylko się dowie, / Kto cię stracił.*" ("Lithuania! My homeland! You are like health. / Only he who had lost you would know / How you ought to be cherished").

Romanticism, as well as the neo-Romanticism in the early twentieth century, played a profound role in both motivating the two uprisings against the Russian imperial rule in Poland and Lithuania (1831-32 and 1863-64), and the formation of the new Lithuanian nationalism that lead to the establishment of Lithuanian Republic in 1918. This kind of resistance proved to be a recurrent situation in modern Lithuanian history. However in terms of political identity, the difference between the two historical episodes lays within

[116]Algimantas Valantiejus, "Early Lithuanian Nationalism: Sources of its Legitimate Meanings in an Environment of Shifting Boundaries," *Nations and Nationalism* 8, no. 3 (2002), 319.
[117]Balkelis, *The Making of Modern Lithuania*, 3.
[118]*Ibid*., 40.
[119] Mathias Niendorf, depicts the complexity and ambiguity of a definition of a Lithuanian in the late sixteenth to late eighteenth century. He claims that the very idea of being a Lithuanian meant a lot to the contemporary nobility, but the claim could be grounded in various kinds of affiliation. See Niendorf, *Lietuvos Didžioji Kunigaikštystė: Studija Apie Nacijos Formavimąsi Ankstyvaisiais Naujaisiais Amžiais 1569-1795*, 107-113.

the aims of those struggling for the independence. In the 19th century, mainly lead by the gentry, the uprisings sought to re-establish the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The two uprisings in the nineteenth century were led by the Polish and Lithuanian gentry, which in terms of political identity at the time was nominally if not practically the same thing.[120] The rest of the population, the less wealthy part of the gentry as well as the serves and citizenry, supported the idea. In return for the help in the uprising, the serfs had been promised freedom from feudal submission.[121] However, the uprisings failed, postponing Lithuanian independence, in a different, modern national form, for half a century.

On the other hand, the modern national movement, which started on the second part of the nineteenth century and resulted with an establishment of the Republic of Lithuania in 1918, emerged for various different reasons and had a different form compared to the previously mentioned uprisings. After the uprising of 1863-64 was quelled, Tsar Alexander II strengthened the repression in his effort to integrate the non-submissive Western part of Russian Empire culturally, administratively and socially. In terms of culture, in 1864, the written word in Latin alphabet (unsuccessful efforts were made to substitute it with Cyrillic) as well as Lithuanian schools were banned. In terms of economy and administration, "after 1863, Muraviev requisitioned estates of those landowners who participated in the uprising which increased an amount of land available for Russian colonization".[122]

At the same time, another decree freed the region's serfs from feudal dependency in 1861. This situation provided the conditions for the emergence of another sources of resistance, which would originate from the ethno-linguistically Lithuanian countryside. "Among them, the most important were the temperance movement instigated by bishop Motiejus Valančius in the 1850s, a system of clandestine schooling and an illegal network of book-smugglers".[123] Coupled with the predominant intellectual strands of nationalism and romanticism, the mixture proved to be capable of formulating a new type of firstly cultural identity, which, however, only became predominant in the last decade of the

[120] Even though some historians tend to draw more strict divisions between the interests and aims of Polish and Lithuanian gentry. See "Č.Iškauskas. 1863 m. sukilimo vertinimai: lenkai ar lietuviai? [Č. Iškauskas. Evaluations of the uprising of 1863: Polish or Lithuanians?]", *delfi.lt*, http://www.delfi.lt/news/ringas/abroad/ciskauskas-1863-m-sukilimo-vertinimai-lenkai-ar-lietuviai.d?id=60517827#ixzz2L6Q9iCk9(Last accessed: 13 February 2013).
[121] "Istorikė Vilma Žaltauskaitė: "1863 m. sukilimas – tai kraujas už prarastą valstybę" [Historian Vilma Žaltauskaitė: "The rebellion of 1863 – blood spilt for the lost country"]", *15min.lt*, http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/ziniosgyvai/interviu/1863-m-sukilimas-tai-kraujas-uz-prarasta-valstybe-599-304803#ixzz2L6J8l7j7 (Last accessed: 13 February 2013).
[122]Balkelis, *The Making of Modern Lithuania*, 40.
[123]*Ibid*.

century.[124]Therefore the nineteenth century marks a shift in the notion of Lithuanianness and a "struggle for the name of a Lithuanian".[125]

Tomas Balkelis describes the further social-economic shifts in Lithuanian society, which played a decisive role for the emergence of Lithuanian national intelligentsia as well as defined the amount of clergy among its midst:

> The confiscations of land property from participants of the 1863 January uprising as well as the 1865 government ban on the purchases of land in the Lithuanian provinces by 'persons of Polish origins' further increased the amount of available land, some of which went to the peasant owners. […] As a result of this land transfer, the socially homogeneous Lithuanian peasantry, among which there emerged group of well-to-do farmers able to afford education for their children. […] One of the early Lithuanian activists, Stasys Matulaitis, pointed out that at the time "a large number of Catholic priests in Lithuania were children of well-to-do peasants, because the profession of priest was one of the most affordable careers for peasant children; it required neither a long period of study nor great expense".Stasys Matulaitis, *1863 Metai Lietuvoj* [The year 1863 in Lithuania] (Minsk: Belarussian Academy of Sciences, 1933), 106.) […] However, by 1870s-1880s increasing numbers of peasant children also started pursuing secular education. Later they formed the core of the new Lithuanian ethnic elite, the *intelligentsia*.[126]

This is how the shift of self-identification from Polish (which was repressed) to Lithuanian encouraged actual change in power politics. The Lithuanian *intelligentsia*, originating from the well-off peasantry, played the profound role in forming the new character (ethno-linguistic, literary, rural) of Lithuanian nationalism as well as in the movement for Lithuanian independence in the early twentieth century. It is also important to note that, due to the above adduced factors, the nationalist 'patriotic movement' consisted of two branches – the Catholic and the secular one. The movement had several reasons. Politically, it emerged as a reaction to Tsarist administrative, economic and cultural repression. Culturally, as mentioned before, it was encouraged by romantic ideas, as well as the intensified interest in Lithuanian history, linguistics and folklore, which provided abundant material for formulating a national narrative and ethnicity-based self-identification. Another reason was the spread of illegal Lithuanian press which was printed in Prussia and smuggled across the border to Lithuanian lands.[127] However, according to Balkelis, the Polish and Lithuanian national movements remained related until the late nineteenth century.[128]

[124] After establishing the Lithuanian Republic during the interwar period, also became political, and based on which the contemporary, post-Soviet political identity is also formulated.
[125] "Viginijus Savukynas: Net Vincas Kudirka gėdijosi savo lietuviškai kalbančių tėvų"
[126] Balkelis, *The Making of Modern Lithuania*, 1-2.
[127] *Ibid*., 26-31.
[128] *Ibid*., 5.

Transition

In this section I have presented a concise, chronologically structured overview of Lithuanian history from the first mentions of the name in 1009 to the creation of the modern state of Lithuanian Republic in 1918. Territorially, during this period, Lithuania has evolved from a Baltic Grand Duchy of Lithuania to that, encompassing various ethnic groups and lands, the main proportion of land being Ruthenian and Ukrainian, to a part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and finally an annexed province of the Russian Empire. This demonstrates how complex and problematic the contexts in which various historical episodes unfold are, and how much factual imprecision can abstract historical images of the region entail, while at the same time being enormously important to the regional politics.

In terms of political nationhood and sovereignty, Lithuanian society moved from an authoritative ruler-based monarchy with ethnically Lithuanian dynasties to the gentry and nobility-based form of republic with an elected monarch, shared with Poland, to a form of 'anarchy of the gentry', and finally succumbed to Russian imperial rule. It is within this latter situation, when the efforts of by then culturally polonised gentry to re-establish the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was quelled, that the modern Lithuanian ethno-linguistically based nation emerged (or was created), led by an enlightened *intelligentsia* of Lithuanian peasant origins.

The topic of Lithuanian history is very complex, rich and vigorously debated both in Lithuanian and foreign intellectual context.It is not only an arena for historical debate, but also for clashes of different political identity narratives as well as indeed power politics itself. This section outlined the core historical episodes that both can be considered as cornerstones for various articulations of Lithuanian identity and cause harshest disagreements. Those are, first of all, the relation between the political and ethnical 'Lithuanianness'; secondly, the figure of Vytautas; thirdly, Christianity and the Catholic faith; fourthly, Lithuanian 'Easternness' and 'Westernness'; fifthly, the battle of Grünwald; sixthly, the cultural polonisation of ethnic Lithuanian nation; seventhly, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth; finally, the 'anarchy of the gentry' and the partitions and the emergence of the modern Lithuanian nation. The next chapter will discuss how historical episodes like these are interpreted and emerge as symbolical images, influencing Lithuanian and foreign identity politics, and what role do they play in the historical Lithuanian articulation of the self.

As mentioned in the introduction, it was not the aim here to present incontestable, 'true' and 'objective' history of Lithuania, which would be a futile effort, not only because of lack of material and technical difficulties, but also because it would inevitably entail a narrative, which through interpreting facts would already impose some sort of agenda. Indeed, the narrative presented here can be criticised or accused of being biased. For instance, someone supporting a more primordialist perception of Lithuanian identity may disagree with me on the topic of continuity of uniform Lithuanian identity in the nineteenth century. Or someone supporting a popular Belarussian historiography may claim that most grand dukes of the GDL were actually Slavic. In fact, ironically, the possible contestability of what has been presented here proves exactly the points, which I will expand upon in the rest of the dissertation: that history, especially the post-Soviet one, consists of various contesting narratives; that these historical narratives can all be argued against, which is where the power-struggle actually lays, and none of them can be absolutely true; that all of them entail a certain mythological element, abbreviating the factual reality that happened, which is inaccessible to us in any form; that the narration of the history of the region is profoundly power-laden; and that history as well as images related are crucial for the post-Soviet political identity narratives.

2.3 Modern Lithuanian political identity and Soviet occupation

The period of the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century marks a new era in Lithuanian history. The ancient *Rzeczpospolita*, along with its gentry and nobility-based citizenry has disappeared and a new culturally grounded, modern Lithuanian nation has emerged, which was to claim, lose and re-claim its own independent polity, maintaining the continuity of its identity in cultural, linguistic and legal terms, as well as in terms of historical narrative. Lithuanians became a modern nation, which over the next century will live, fight and even sacrifice their lives for this newly born identity. This identity, however, was strong enough to withstand a century of massive turmoil both in the region and the world, profound change in all spheres of life as well as fifty years of Soviet occupation and repressions.

Transition, liminality and the birth of modern Lithuanian identity

The period from the second part of the nineteenth century onwards is marked by a vast amount of consecutive and parallel shifts and ruptures in all spheres of life, ranging from technological and economic to political and existential, all over Europe. These global processes, naturally, also touched Lithuanians, altered their everyday life as well as their

self and world perception. As mentioned in the last section, in the nineteenth century, partially resonating the general European trend of the 'Spring of Nations' a gradual deterioration of the ancient political identity (the upper estate citizenship of the Polish-Lithuanian *Commonwealth*), and the emergence of a new, modern one took place.

It consequently had a profound impact on the notion of 'Lithuanianness' as well as on the notion of the political. The shift started at the political level, with the annexation of *Rzeczpospolita* by the neighbouring countries. This deprived the multi-faceted structural carcass of Polish-Lithuanian population of its 'exoskeleton' – its polity, or, to use a Foucauldian image – of its power discourse. The Commonwealth was no longer there, if only in the visions of the contemporary romantics. This meant the Polish-Lithuanian political nation seized to exist as well. Now they were the gentry of the Russian empire, yet until 1863 still perceiving themselves as the citizens of a lost republic that is to be re-established.

After the quelled uprising, a type of meaning-vacuum in terms of power justification at the formal level emerged. The titles of the gentry (i.e. the denominators of non-existent citizenry), along with their privileges remained in place, but there was no sovereign who, by his decrees, legitimized them. The Lithuanian Statute, with some adjustments, remained in power, maintaining its administrative function, but the political institution that established these legislations was no longer existent. As mentioned in the previous section, efforts have been made, in form of two uprisings, to re-establish the lost polity. However, after they were quelled, so was the idea of the lost citizenry of *Rzeczpospolita* in Lithuania.

This paradoxical situation was coupled with another step of deterioration – the abolishment of serfdom in the Russian Empire. In 1861, Tsar Alexander I released all serfs from feudal dependability. On the micro level this meant the shift in long-established social relations, as the yesterday serf had a legal right not to obey his former sovereign, be it a member of gentry or nobility. This deconstructed the remaining social hierarchical order in the society, the "endoskeleton", therefore completely tearing down the remaining 'social carcass' of the former Polish-Lithuanian society.

Previously, the citizens, i.e. the ones with proportionate power to decide the future of the polity, were the upper estates. It was them who had the political and existential power over the future political decisions and were thus considered the citizens of the *Rzeczpospolita* as a *res publica*. In the Russian Empire, however, power was much more centralized, which made the former social structure and power distribution collapse. The serfdom decree levelled the former century-old hierarchical structure of Lithuanian society. The most

important formal change that emanated as a result of such change was the shift of the gentry from politically being 'a someone' to being 'no one' (provided that 'to be someone' politically means to be a free person who has political power over his future), just as the rest of the population.

In other words, Lithuanian society found itself in a paradoxical, liminal and structure-less condition, where titles, denominating not only social, but also existential status lost their meaning, the formerly structured, traditional social organism collapsed and merged into a faceless mass of 'no one'. The centuries-old political 'self' disappeared. The pre-modern cosmology of the political and social order fell and a new one had to be generated, new explanations for existence of the political self had to be found. This kind of transitional condition, the situation of formal death and future rebirth will be discussed in more detail in chapter four.[129]

The new national movement as well as the intellectual re-articulation of Lithuanianness began under these conditions. It emerged from the social, cultural and ethical environment of richer, ethnically Lithuanian peasantry, which had no '*Rzeczpospolitan*' perception of *gente lituanus, natione polonus*, as the former ethnic Lithuanian upper estates had been titling themselves. They were simply *gente lituanus*, which therefore entailed new kind of non-political notions. However, it needed a grounding, a narrative, or, as Mircea Eliade would put it, a founding myth.[130] "The ideology of Enlightenment required to encourage the consciousness of simple people. Since peasants spoke no other language, that means, in order to enlighten them, one needed to write in their language. Only after the national consciousness has been formed, can we speak about the creation of a national state."[131]

Modern Lithuanianness: non-political, linguistic, ethno-cultural and ethical.

After the collapse of the ancient pre-modern Lithuanian political identity at all structural levels of the society, Romantic Lithuanian historians and linguists, influenced by Herderian ideas about unique national spirit and historical continuity of cultural identity,

[129] However I should emphasize the importance of this liminal condition as an experience, because it will repeat itself three times in the twentieth century: during the creation of the Interwar Lithuanian Republic, during the war and the destruction of this polity by the Soviet occupation, and during the 'rebirth' of the national Lithuanian polity in 1990. This aspect of cyclical death and rebirth is particularly characteristic forpost-Soviet political identity formation.

[130] Timothy Snyder describes the formationof the new Lithuanian identity through a process that could as well be called myth making. He shows how the historical narrative was re-formated and Lithuanian language venerated in order to formulate a new kind of imaginary to base the modern Lithuanian identity on. (Snyder, *Tautų Rekonstrukcija: Lietuva, Lenkija, Ukraina, Baltarusija, 1569-1999*, 32-40.) However, it could be argued that Snyder's claims about exclusively low origins of ethnic Lithuanians is overblown. For instance, Snyder uses language as a denominator for the 'Lithuanian' category when discussing pre-modern social structure, yet at the same time claiming that language became a meaningful denominator of Lithuanianness only in the nineteenth century.

[131]Genzelis, *Socialinės Ir Politinės Minties Raida Lietuvoje*, 142-143.

purposed a new myth of origins, a new axis of purpose and meaning. One of the most important factors for the modern articulation of Lithuanian identity was language. Its ancient origins in Sanskrit as well as its archaic complexity and richness became particularly important in establishing the conception of Lithuanian uniqueness and particularity.[132]

The newly-articulated modern Lithuanian identity also reverberated Herder's idea of the non-political but rather cultural nature of national selfhood. Simonas Daukantas, an enlightened Lithuanian romantic historian, has written the first history of Lithuanian culture in Lithuanian in 1845.[133] His work could be better perceived as a piece of fact-based fictional literature rather than what is nowadays called a factual history. In it, he puts forward a kind of a historical myth about the 'noble primitive', an idealized, partially fictional description of a morally better, cleaner ancient Lithuanian culture.

> An episode from prelate Mykolas Krupavičius's childhood unveils the general context of 19th century national self-perception. Krupavičius claims that in those times, there was no knowledge amongst the common folk about the prior free Lithuania… This episode from not so distant past encourages the thought that the famous painting "Karalių pasaka [The Tale of Kings]" (1909) by Mykolas Konstantinas Čiurlionis was not merely a product of the artist's elaborate imagination. It is plausible that this best expresses the contemporary popular perception of Lithuanian history, founding the Lithuanian identity. Powerful kings, unidentifiable with any particular historical character, hold a luminous city in their hands and watch over it with their caring eyes. These kings are as if beyond the verge of history, and yet they are historically important metaphysical patrons, not human actors, participating in history.[134]

Mykalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, *Karalių Pasaka* [The Tale of Kings], 1909, *Lrt.lt*, http://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/kultura/26/22136/po_pasauli_veziojami_m._k._ciurlionio_paveikslai_nyksta_sako_tyrinetojas, (Last accessed: April 15, 2015).

[132] Similarly as in the case of Hungary, language remains one of the most important elements of Lithuanian national identity.

[133] The entire book, called "*Būdas senovės lietuvių, kalnėnų ir žemaičių* [The Character of Lithuanians, Highlander and Samogitian]" can be found published online, at: http://www.antologija.lt/text/simonas-daukantas-budas-senoves-lietuviu-kalnenu-zemaiciu/ (Last accessed: 9 July 2013).

[134] Putinaitė, *Šiaurės Atėnų Tremtiniai. Lietuviškosios Tapatybė Paieškos Ir Europos Vizijos XXa.*, 8-9.

This powerful quote by Nerija Putinaitė indirectly presents a precise description of an ancestral image or archetype – someone that existed and yet is not factually true. Yet it had and still has a tremendous impact on Lithuanian historical narrative and imaginary.[135] Daukantas based his conception of Lithuanian nationhood on more or less homogenous cultural, agrarian, Lithuanian linguistic and pagan grounds, separating his notion from the Polish-Lithuanian heritage, the noble estates and multicultural aspect of the GDL. Such articulation provided the de-politicized and de-hierarchized post-GDL peoples with a new kind of modern 'selfhood' and motivated the resistance to the imperial Russian rule. This kind of cultural rather than political conceptualization of a nation also became a core element in Lithuanian identity, and the basis for further intellectual articulations of Lithuanian nation and its purpose, once the modern Lithuanian Republic was established.

However in terms of political independence, the main nationalist movement emerged with the next generation of Lithuanian *intelligentsia* in the last decades of the 19th century. Indeed, the formation of Lithuanian ethnic national identity firstly came about as a cultural project. In the early twentieth century, however a split between a nationalist and liberal *intelligentsia* on the one side, and the socialist one on the other emerged: "The split between liberals and socialists had such profound repercussions on the further development of the movement, that Lithuanian socialists come to be credited for 'politicization of the entire Lithuanian movement".[136] Socialists established the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party in 1896, and in reaction, a few years later, the liberals established Liberal Democratic Party, and the Catholics established Lithuanian Christian Democratic Party in 1907: "Its late emergence reflected the unwillingness of the Catholic church to embroil itself in the political struggle as well as its belated response to the challenge of the secular intelligentsia".[137] However these parties were not yet influential among the wider population, nor did they have much influence politically.

The opportunity to establish political influence and to transform the national movement into an autonomous state emerged towards the end of the World War. The war forced many Lithuanians to flee the homeland either deeper into Russian Empire or to the West. Therefore the project of establishing the independence emerged outside Lithuania. And it was in exile that the idea of a sovereign independent Lithuania was formulated.[138] According to Balkelis, this nostalgic experience provided the conditions to re-assess the

[135]Putinaitė is sceptical about this kind of a-rational treatment of identity. However what I will argue in the next chapter, is quite the opposite – there can be no such thing as rationally and pragmatically 'engineered', factually 'correct' identity. And such images are a normal part of human cognition, be it pre-modern or modern.
[136]Balkelis, *The Making of Modern Lithuania*, 32.
[137]*Ibid*.
[138]*Ibid*., p. 106.

relationship with the homeland as well as played a uniting role in mobilizing the wider Lithuanian population.[139] This allowed for the *intelligentsia* to establish the idea of independent Lithuania within the wider population. However there were also those who remained in Lithuania.

One of the most important people in modern Lithuanian history is Jonas Basanavičius. His work, 'Iš krikščionijos santykių su senovės lietuvių tikyba ir kultūra [On the Relationships Between the Christendom and Ancient Lithuanian Faith and Culture]' is of particular importance in our context because it introduced two ideas about Lithuanian identity which, either in pure form or transformed, for instance in a form of Euro-scepticism, still reverberate in the contemporary Lithuanian identity narrative. The first idea was that after Christianity (as an institution, not moral faith) reached Lithuanians, their culture and ethics entered a downfall. And the occupations suffered as well as the internal degradation of once glorious culture is but a symptom of this process. The second idea was that one has to restore Lithuanian culture, preserve what is left and continue the work on developing it on ethno-cultural basis.[140] In a very epochal romantic fashion, Basanavičius dedicated all his life to pursue the latter goal. Later Basanavičius grew into a symbolic figure, which is still important in a nowadays national narrative, seen as a patriarch of the nation, who led the assembly that signed the declaration of independence on 16 February 1918. This was the beginning of the modern sovereign state of Lithuania.

Lithuanian state in between the wars

The interwar period is exceptionally important, firstly because in 1918, the romantic ideas of the enlightened modern Lithuanian intellectuals of agrarian origins materialised, and the modern Lithuanian political identity finally took shape of a self-governing state. With no prior experience in the field, the leadership of the state, consisting of a board of intellectuals of many different occupations, began paving a way for a new, modern kind of polity. To the contemporaries, having lived their entire life under imperial conditions, this was an entirely new experience. A broad array of administrative institutions and an entire governmental apparatus as well as a judicial system had to be created. But also – a new narrative and identity imaginary had to be developed in order to unify the newly born political nation under a common cultural and political narrative and imaginary.

Establishing a modern nation-state, which in terms of geopolitical composition as well as ideological intention resembled rather the ethnic Lithuania of early thirteenth century than either the multinational Grand Duchy ruled by Vytautas or *Rzeczpospolita*, was an

[139] *Ibid*., p. 109.
[140] Putinaitė, *Šiaurės Atėnų Tremtiniai. Lietuviškosios Tapatybė Paieškos Ir Europos Vizijos XXa.*, 22-23.

important achievement to the Lithuanian *intelligentsia*. The newly formed state was to be a representative multi-party democracy, with three separated powers, a constitution, equal citizenry and no remnants of feudal social structure. In the contemporary context, it was one of the most democratic Eastern European states.[141] The biggest and most important political parties, among other smaller ones, were *Tautininkai* (Nationalists), Christian Democrats, Social Democrats and the Peasant Folk Block.[142] However, the situation was still unstable, there were still a lot to be done in establishing the Lithuanian polity and there were lively discussions on the topic in the contemporary press. Four main traditions of political thought participated in the creation of the Interwar Lithuanian political sphere.[143]

> *Tautininkai* were the main supporters of an authoritarian regime. They congregated around a journal *Vairas* [The Steering Wheel]. Authors of Catholic inclinations gathered around *Židinys* [The Hearth], *Naujoji Romuva* [The New *Romuva*; *Romuva* was a religious and cultural center of ancient Baltic Tribes], and *XX Amžius* [The 20th Century]. Alongside these, there was a popular [vernacular, folksy, demotic] democratic tradition of political thought, congregating around *Varpas* [The Bell] and the Leftist thinkers, collaborating in *Kultūra* [Culture]. The most prominant in the public space was the voice of *Tautininkai* (Antanas Smetona, Izidorius Tamošaitis, Domas Cesecičius, Juozas Tomkus, Vytautas Jakševičius – Alantas). The organic Catholic political strand was exceptional for its famous intellectuals (Stasys Šalkauskis, Kazys Pakštas and the members of the *Generation of 1936*).[144] This political strand was the most influential intellectual opposition of A. Smetona's regime, having suggested some mature works. The Popular democratic thought was represented by lawyers Mykolas Römeris, Petras Leonas, a medic Kazys Girinius, economists Albinas Rimka, Vincas Kvieska. The Leftist political thought strictly criticized the existing political order (Steponas Kairys, Vincas Čepinskis, Augusinas Janulaitis). It is necessary to distinct the Interwar intellectuals, fascinated by Marxism (Juozas Galvydis) from the functionaries of Lithuanian Communist Party, which was prohibited by law (Zigmas Angarietis, Vincas Kapsukas). The latter acted as a force that was opposed to Lithuania and representing the interests of the Soviet Union.[145]

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[141] Possibly because the de-hierarchized, relatively homogenous and 'flat' social matter of Lithuanian peasantry comprised the major part of the society. The mentioned *intelligentsia* also grew out of this strata, so there was no hereditary ambition to exclusivity that would contradict this avant-garde political project.

[142]Genzelis, *Socialinės Ir Politinės Minties Raida Lietuvoje*, 227-230.

[143]Justinas Dementavičius, "Lithuanian Political Thought in the Twentieth Century and its Reflections in Sąjūdis. what Kind of State have Lithuanians been Fighting for?" *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 6, no. 1 (2011), 110.

[144] "The *Generationof 1936* is the third Lithuanian Christian cultural generation. It is a Western culture - oriented generation that has matured in an independed Lithuania. Its most important members are: Juozas Ambrazevičius (Brazaitis), Pranas Dielninkaitis, Jonas Grinius, Zenonas Ivinskis, Stasys Yla, Juozas Keliuotis, Antanas Maceina, Ignas Malinauskas, Pranas Mantvydas, Ignas Skrupskelis, Antanas Vaičiulaitis. Congregated around the monthly journal *Židinys*, the weekly *Naujoji Romuva* and the daily *XX Amžius*, they first of all were a cultural movement. After the loss of independence, these people comprised the core of resistence to Nazi and Soviet occupants."

[145]Algimantas Jankauskas and Alvydas Jokubaitis, "Tarp Individualizmo Ir Kolektyvizmo: Politiškumo Paieškos Tarpukario Lietuvoje," in *Lietuvos Politinės Minties Antologija, Lietuvos Politinė Mintis 1918 – 1940 M.* [In Between Individualism and Colecitivsm: The Search for the Political in Interwar Lithuania], Vol. 1 (Vilnius: Vilnius University Press, 2012), 16.

The democratic government in the interwar Lithuania lasted from 1918 when Lithuanian Republic was established, till 1926, when the government of the country was overtaken by a relatively mild authoritarian regime of Antanas Smetona.

However, "while historians attempted to draw parallels with Hitler or Mussolini, Smetona remained a practicing Catholic, did not pursue anti-Semitic policies and had a number of Jewish friends".[146] Smetona's regime was overall fairly well accepted among the majority of Lithuanians. It is doubtful that during this rather short interwar period, the general Lithuanian population, which had maintained its hierarchic agrarian understanding of social order, traditional ethics and autocratic source of government from the Imperial times, could have developed a deeper self perception as an egalitarian liberal 'civic contract' society. In other words there was no contradiction in terms of legitimization of sovereign government and the idea of a strong leader.[147]

However Smetona's regime was not restrictive of intellectual freedom. In fact, high-level debates on political and philosophical, but also social and economical levels were taking place among the well-educated Lithuanian intellectual elite of the time. In opposition to the predominant Smetona's *tautininkai* narrative of Lithuanian political identity, other narratives, such as Catholic personalist and socialist/critical were present as well and often harshly criticized the existing regime.[148] In the next section, I will group and overview three dominant intellectual strands, also discussing their continuity through the twentieth century, until present times.

Second world war and Soviet occupation

The Second World War was devastating to the young Lithuanian state. The Molotov-Ribbentrop pact (23 August 1938) decided the fate of Lithuania, which even though initially included into the Nazi German sphere of influence, after signing of a second secret protocol actually fell under Soviet influence. At first (and no one knew about the secret protocols by then) this was seen as a positive thing, since in 1939 the historical Lithuanian capital, along with Vilnius region, which the modern Lithuanian state had historical narrative-motivated claims to and after the First World War fought the Poles for, was connected to Lithuania. Nijolė Bražėnaitė-Lukšienė-Paronetto, a wife of one of Lithuanian guerrilla fighters, remembers that the reactions to Soviet tanks, driving along the streets varied:

[146]Mole, *The Baltic States from the Soviet Union to the European Union: Identity, Discourse*, 44.
[147]Jankauskas and Jokubaitis, *Tarp Individualizmo Ir Kolektyvizmo: Politiškumo Paieškos Tarpukario Lietuvoje*, 164.
[148]*Ibid*., 16.

> …We suddenly saw the tanks. We had heard that there was something going on in the relationships with the Soviet Union. But to see tanks with your own eyes was a very strong experience. We stopped in silence.
>
> Other people were also speechless. Some of them had tears dripping down their cheeks. They were but watching in silence. Meanwhile others, probably, secret communists, mostly of Jewish ethnicity, ran with flowers to meet them and kissed the soldiers. And we were standing and wiping the tears…
>
> I wouldn't say that there were masses of people. But there were quite a few running towards those tanks, with flowers.[149]

In June 1940, the Red Army entered Lithuanian territory. The state was annexed and the polity destroyed. Despite the joy of some, however, Soviet occupation resulted in massive repressions and numerous deportations of Lithuanian economic, cultural and intellectual elite to gulags all over Soviet Russia.[150]

> People waited for war very much. The war was factually taking place. Only here, people with weapons were fighting the unarmed: they were catching, torturing and often killing them. And those unarmed ones couldn't understand the reason why this was happening. They hadn't done anything wrong. At first they weren't even resisting, even though they did possess weapons. Everyone therefore waited for change. Especially when our elite had been stuffed into jails, tortured, exiled and killed. People were waiting for the war as for salvation…
>
> When in 1941 an uprising started, my mother allowed for the establishment of an Aleksotas rebel base in our home…
>
> The most joyous was the moment when Levas Prapuolenis announced the Lithuanian independence on the radio…I remember how everyone were kissing and congratulating each other, crying out of joy. And we all cried together. This was just before the German army entered.[151]

Therefore, when in 1941 the Nazi occupation began, most people were shocked by this, but most of them took this as a better evil out of the two.

> I didn't notice much enthusiasm. Nor was there any meeting with flowers. The Germans entered with their tanks, and people were hoping that life would at least not be the same as it was under the Bolsheviks. These were the hopes. According to that German saying: '*Ordnung muss sein*'. We also knew that a Temporary government had been formed, we were hoping that it would be able to manoeuvre out of this and defend the Lithuanian independence.[152]

Only around 1943 did an adequate, completely negative attitude towards the Nazis form. The communists as well as the part of society which was pro-Soviet was evacuated to

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[149] Vidmantas Valiušaitis, "Legendinio partizano Daumanto žmona – apie okupantus, lietuvius ir žydus [A Wife of a Legendary Guerrilla Fighter Daumantas – on Occupants, Lithuanians and Jews]", *lrytas.lt*,http://www.lrytas.lt/print.asp?k=news&id=13769225301375202543 (Last accessed: 29 August 2013).

[150] For more information on the Soviet repressions during the first occupation see: Arvydas Anušauskas, *Teroras Ir Nusikaltimai Žmoniškumui: Pirmoji Sovietinė Okupacija 1940–1941 m.* [Terror and Crimes Against Humanity: the First Soviet Occupation 1940 – 1941] (Vilnius: Margi raštai, 2006).

[151] Valiušaitis, "Legendinio partizano Daumanto žmona – apie okupantus, lietuvius ir žydus".

[152] *Ibid*.

Russia in 1941. Nazi occupation had the biggest impact in cities, where a large percentage of inhabitants were Jews. The Nazi regime removed the old Jewish population from the cities. During the end of the war, many cities suffered bombardments. In the countryside, however, the way of life has not changed drastically from the first Soviet occupation until the second. Lithuanians were allowed to maintain their own local nationalized administrations, with their own officers (supervised and approved by the Nazi regime's confidants), and the everyday life relatively unaltered until 1942, when the 'reprivatisation' began by the German colonists.[153]

Having seen the deportations during the first Soviet occupation, towards the end of the war (in 1944-1945), many Lithuanian intellectuals emigrated to Western Europe and the Americas. They took with them a notion of 'Lithuanian-ness' that they inherited from the interwar period. The biggest concentration of Lithuanian émigrés was in the USA where they established several organisations, in effort to preserve their identity and support their homeland in any way possible.

Kazys Daugėla, an emigrant photographer, who, among many others, fled Lithuania in 1944, represented his personal experience in his photography, combining images of Lithuanian countryside, people and religious symbols, water, symbolizing the Atlantic ocean and the US in form of the Liberty statue. The photographs emenate emotions of longing, sadness and nostalgia. (Daugėla 1992).

The second Soviet occupation, however, was even more destructive and would last for the next half a century. The repressions continued throughout the entire occupation. Many brightest, wealthiest and most cultured Lithuanians were once again put into animal wagons and under terrible, often mortal conditions sent to labour camps all over Soviet Union.[154] In between 1944 and 1953, 135 522 people were arrested and imprisoned in Lithuania and gulags in the USSR.[155] However exiles continued until 1987 and the overall number of those repressed is unknown. A local puppet government was established and

[153]Arūnas Bubnys, *Vokiečių Okupuota Lietuva (1941 – 1944)* [Lithuania Under German Occupation (1941 – 944)] (Vilnius: Genocide and Resistance Centre of Lithuania, 1998).
[154] See appendix 4.
[155] Information taken from the Sąjūdis headquarter's archive.

propaganda of Lithuania wilfully joining the Union was spread. Anyone denying the official propaganda was repressed.[156]

Among many destructive processes that the Soviet occupation brought about in Lithuania as well as many other agrarian Eastern European countries was the technocracy and industrialization. In various forms it pervaded the organic, balanced agrarian lifestyle of Lithuanian population, meliorating their *lifeworld* and enforcing modern forms of life. Left: pictures before and after the occupation. (Sources: (Levinas 1983, 151); (Valiulis 1971, 17); (Žvirgždas 2002, 153).

> People knew that this was a communist government. Paleckis wasn't a communist but everyone understood that this government is put in place by communists and will execute their will.
>
> No one could say openly what they were thinking. Arrests began very briefly. In our school class only there were a few boys who were arrested. We were warned by parents not to say anything about the occupation publically […]
>
> It was obvious that this was an occupant power and that life had changed profoundly. What was created [the independence] was dismantled very quickly.[157]

In the opposition to the occupation, many young men and women hid in the Lithuanian woods and became guerrilla fighters, battling the regime up until mid sixties, when the last two fighters, refusing to surrender, shot themselves in 1965. However the very last one hid in Švenčionys region for 35 years, until 1986, when he died.

[156] The scenario eerily resembles one taking place in the occupied Crimea and the ongoing conflict in Donbass region nowadays.
[157] "Legendinio partizano Daumanto žmona – apie okupantus, lietuvius ir žydus"

Pictures of tortured and murdered Lithuanian guerrilla fighters taken by Soviet officers. (Genocide Museum, Author‘s personal archive)

Many people were interrogated, tortured, would simply disappear, would be forced to spy on their friends and relatives or be imprisoned in the KGB prison opposite to the Lukiškės square, in Vilnius.Lukiškės square, which was then called Lenin’s square, had a figure of Lenin supposedly pointing to the ‘brighter tomorrow’, but actually, ironically enough to the KGB prison.[158] Nowadays, there is a Genocide Museum in the quarters of the prison, dedicated to the Soviet repressions.[159] The prison underneath is also open for tourists.[160]

After Stalin’s death, especially during a short period of hope for change under Khrushchev, the repressions became less evident, even if the atmosphere remained tense. A new generation of Lithuanians grew, with no memory of interwar Lithuania. The hope to re-establish the independent modern Lithuanian polity had been lost, or at least kept in secret from the official ears, and would perhaps only be mentioned in kitchens of communal apartments, among trusted friends.[161] Lithuanian identity once again became a cultural phenomenon, despite the russification in the Soviet Union, remaining alive in Lithuanian

[158] The taking down of the statue after the independence became a symbolic act and a joyous occasion for Lithuanians. The Lukiškės square, however, still remains a grey zone in the city, as it brings many painful memories to the elder generation.

[159] A question whether Soviet repressions in Lithuania can be called a genocide had been debated, especially by the Jewish community.

[160] See Appendix 1 for pictures

[161] It was indeed difficult to trust anyone in the regime, even the close ones. Children were taught to spy on their parents and people were bribed or blackmailed to spy on their friends, not to talk about the work colleagues. Any critique towards the regime or – even worse – any discussions about freedom were to be either kept to oneself or shared in a tongue in cheek language, indirectly and secretly.

language as well as folklore and other cultural forms that were not perceived as a threat to the regime.[162]

Under Brezhnev, life in Soviet Union entered a long-lasting stagnation. All hopes of any change or westernization were shut. The official space was harshly censored, and the only information that would reach the public was carefully filtered propaganda.

(Šeškus 2012). Many Lithuanian photographer‘s works in the Brezhnev‘s era had similar artistic character, conveying greyness, dullness and apathy. Their works reflected the true emptiness and meaninglessness of the contemporary political, social and cultural and simply human life. Agnė Narušytė called the phenomena the *esthetics of boredom* (Narušytė, 2008). See appendix3 for more.

The resistance against the regime remained, however, whether it was against the occupation of Lithuania or simply the absurdity of the contemporary life.[163] In 1971 a young, longhaired Lithuanian, Romas Kalanta, publically poured gasoline over himself and set it on fire. After this act, the repressions strengthened.[164] The dissident Catholic Church remained one of the main bastions preserving and promoting anti-Soviet Lithuanian identity. The most important underground periodical, written and edited by the church was *Lietuvos katalikų kronika* or the Chronical of Lithuanian Catholics. In it, the repressions of the regime first of all against the church, but others as well were documented, in effort to gather the true information about the acts of Soviets in Lithuania, which would not be

[162] Folk culture, however, was formatted to be politically and ideologically ‘correct’. Yuri Slezkine discusses how folk culture was transformed, and formatted to fit the political goals of the Communist party throughout the USSR. SeeYuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, Or how a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (1994), 414-452.

[163] See appendix 2 for examples of artistic forms of resistance.

[164] Longhaired youth was being caught in the streets, their hair was being cut and they would then be sent to mental hospitals. Some would go there willingly, in order to avoid service in the Soviet Army or fighting in Afghanistan war which started in 1978. Others would be sent there if they would publicly say or do something allegedly anti-Soviet. The explanation was that since, according to Marxist doctrine (which, even though being atheistic, in Soviet Union could be compared to a grotesque quasi-religious, sect-like cult. See appendix 2) communism is the best form of life and the socialist regime was progressing towards it, anyone resisting the so-called ‘progress’ had to be insane. In a worse case, the person could be sent to a gulag or get a ‘wolf’s ticket’, which would prevent the person from getting any job in the Union and therefore being able to sustain himself.

accessible officially. It was printed in secret and spread to the West as well as among Lithuanians.

After Brezhnev's and soon after Andropov's and Chernenko's deaths, with "young" Gorbachev coming into power, the deterioration of the system was obvious. By then, yet another generation of Lithuanians was growing. News and information from and about the West, mostly from Poland and Finland reached Lithuanians through radio and television. Stories by those lucky enough to have been allowed to leave for a trip to the West, and smuggled items which were of far better quality, much better looking than the Soviet ones inspired dreams of life behind the Iron Curtain. The West was idealized and dreamt of. Western products were industrially copied and imitated in the Soviet Union.

In the later eighties, the exiles or children of the exiles started returning from labour camps all over Siberia and other remote parts of Russia, telling terrible stories of their experience.[165] Those who still had any illusions about the regime were petrified by what they heard. The Perestroika and the loosening of the grip of control provided an opportunity for Lithuanians to put forward claims – firstly for the improvement of life, secondly for the dissolution of lies that the population had been fed for nearly half a century with, and finally – for the independence of Lithuania and the withdrawal of the occupants.

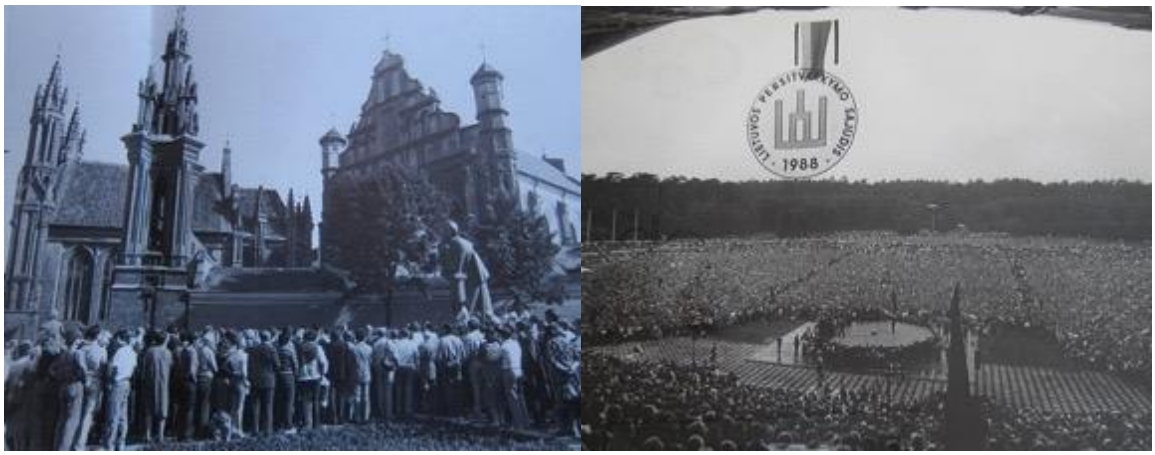
Struggle for independence and the post – Soviet Lithuanian Republic

The beginning of the independence movement physically may be said to have started before the fall of Berlin wall, on 23 August 1987, when despite the clear possibility of getting arrested and repressed, a relatively small group of Lithuanians gathered near a memorial to Adam Mickiewicz in Vilnius to commemorate a Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, which as mentioned gave the Soviets way for the occupation of Lithuania in 1940. Nijolė Sadūnaitė, a dissident, working for the Chronicles of Lithuanian Catholics, began the meeting demanding freedom to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.[166]

One year later, on 23 August 1988, the Lithuanian organisation "Sąjūdis", which was the leading actor in the movement for independence, and its leader prof. Vytautas Landsbergis, who would later become the leader of the High Council of the newly re-established Lithuanian Republic, organized another meeting in Vingis park in Vilnius. This time, 250 thousand people (myself included) attended this meeting. Soon after that, on the 20th

[165] See Appendix 4 for pictures.
[166] Vytautas Raškauskas "Nijolė Sadūnaitė: Svarbiausia – tiesa [Nijolė Sadūnaitė: Truth is the most important]", *Bernardinai.lt*, http://www.bernardinai.lt/index.php/straipsnis/2011-05-09-nijole-sadunaite-svarbiausia-tiesa/62424 (Last accessed: 28 April 2015),

November 1988, Sąjūdis declared a moral independence from the Soviet Union.[167] The movement attracted a lot of foreign attention, therefore the regime, obliged to follow its rhetoric of "putting on the human face", was hesitant to physically restrain the movement.



The spread of the independence movement over a year. Left: the first independence movement meeting in 1987; right: the meeting in 1988. (Sources: Headquarters of *Sąjūdis*;(Žilinskaitė 1998))

Many other meetings and public demonstrations followed these events during the next two years and events unfolded at a very quick pace. Having started with claims for 'historical truth' and 'change', the movement soon became more articulate and started declared the struggle for political, legal and economic independence and restitution of the occupied Lithuanian Republic as well as that of other Baltic States. The regime failed to contain the movement, which much like almost a century ago was led by Lithuanian *intelligentsia* and had massive public support while the process was observed by foreign press. Probably the most important event before the declaration of independence was the 'Baltic Way' action, when two million Lithuanians Latvians and Estonians literally joined hands, one more year after the meeting in Vingis Park, on the 23 August 1989, once again in commemoration of the infamous pact.

Lithuanian independence was declared on 11 March 1990, and the first Parliament was elected in 1992. Much to surprise of many, the majority in the Lithuanian Parliament Seimas was won by Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party, which consisted of former members of Lithuanian Communist party. Nevertheless, four years later, the party was not re-elected, proving a functioning democracy in the state. On 10-13 January 1991, the Soviet Army gave one last effort to take back the independent Lithuanian state by force, but lost to an unarmed resistance of Lithuanians who would peacefully refuse to let the

[167]Romas Batūra, *Į Laisvę Baltijos Keliu* [Towards Freedom on the Baltic Way] (Vilnius: Seimas Press "Valstybės žinios", 2009).

Soviet tanks and soldiers past to occupy Lithuanian parliament.[168] In August 1991, after the putsch in Moscow, the Soviet Army left Lithuania.

After defending the independence, the young state had to face multiple difficulties, firstly economic, but also cultural, social and political. Over a very short period of time, the state had to overcome massive changes in all spheres of life. It had to adapt to a new economic and political system, but most importantly to a new way of life in freedom and new set of rules and values. Despite the challenge, 14 years after the declaration of the independence, in 2004, Lithuania was accepted to NATO and the European Union, in 2009 Vilnius was declared a European Capital and in 2013 it was chosen to lead the European Parliament. Unlike in the case of many other post-Soviet countries, this shows Lithuania's clear general pro-European orientation in terms of political identity.

2.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was threefold. First of all, briefly to introduce the Western European reader to the complex and under researched history of Lithuania and Eastern Europe in general. The second function of this chapter is to mention historical episodes that are important to the post-Soviet Lithuanian historical identity narrative and *political cosmology*, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Due to this reason, some facts of local importance, such as the self-immolation of Romas Kalanta, gain bigger symbolic importance than some more universal historical events. Such events as the partition of *Rzeczpospolita* or, of course, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, are important historical corner-stone events when discussing not only Lithuanian history, but also that of many other Eastern and Central European countries.

From what has been discussed in the chapter, several general themes within Lithuanian history begin to emerge. First of all, quite evident is the fact that the region between Russia and Germany has always been a liminal space, where dynamic political shifts have been constantly taking place. From Medieval times various new political entities have been forming, transitioning and disappearing in the region, which makes the regional history a particularly complex topic. Therefore questions of the continuity of the GDL in forms of modern Lithuanian, Belarussian, Polish or Ukrainian states remain open. For the sake of clarity I do make a distinction between the modern Lithuanian political identity and the pre-modern one, even if other opinions and historical narratives may also exist.

[168] See appendix 7 for pictures.

Secondly, the development of Lithuanian political identity, in all of its multiple dimensions should be observed within the context of tension between the East and the West. Lithuania, in forms of GDL and *Rzeczpospolita*, has been a Western cultural entity for 300 years, and for the most of last 200 years the region has been under Eastern, whetherRussian Imperial, or Soviet influence, or else'returned to the West'. This ambiguity is evident even nowadays, and the problematic remains important.

Thirdly, when observing and trying to understand the pre-modern, but most importantly – modern Lithuanian political identity, three major elements emerge. One is an agrarian (neither proletarian, neither bourgeois nor aristocratic) culture that provides fundamental symbols and meanings for Lithuanian identity. Only in the Soviet Union, under Brezhnev, when a new, city-grown generation of Lithuanians had formed, did the ethnic Lithuanian city culture start emerging. Another is the idea that modern 'Lithuanian-ness' has to be understood first of all in linguistic, ethnic and cultural terms. Partially because of its origins in the romantic intellectual movements and partially due to the constant shifts in the political sphere of Lithuanian life, which gave an idea but not a strong tradition of modern Lithuanian polity that would sustain for a longer period of time. Finally, a religious Catholic element has played a profoundly important cultural and political role throughout the Lithuanian history. Despite the atheistic Soviet regime and overall contemporary secularism, Catholicism and religious behaviour has always been an important factor to Lithuanian political identity.

The final issue that has to be mentioned is the fact that Soviet history is a particularly complicated and under-researched topic, and the studies of Sovietology are still under development.[169] There are competing, politically, emotionally and personally laden interpretations of the union's history. Therefore, the one presented here may not be the only interpretation of the events that were taking place for the later part of the twentieth century. Either way, when talking about Lithuanian historical narrative and identity-related social imaginary, this makes no difference, and the newly-found facts may not alter the clichés that comprise the post-Soviet Lithuanian political identity.

[169]The Kremlin is still denying access to a lot of information on Soviet history.

CHAPTER 3. Lithuania: creation of political cosmology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to develop a theoretical interpretation that would convincingly explain the post-USSR political identity formation in Lithuania, accounting for seemingly a-rational, yet absolutely crucial aspects of the process, such as symbolism, emotional association and existential change, etc. It discusses the second level of identity formation (the first being historical and political process discussed in the previous chapter) – intellectual reflection. It argues that post-USSR politics is as much symbolically and emotionally infused as it is rational. In fact, my argument is that what is nowadays called 'rational interests' emerge from the image of the self and the world, which is by nature symbolical. This is because political identity is a much deeper and more complex phenomenon than merely a question of calculative economic or political factors. It has an existential aspect, which cannot be perceived without accounting for the metaphysical. The self can only truly and authentically exist if it is an embedded part of ontology. This rather intuitively perceived idea renders reflection of symbolism and narrative an existential part of identity rather than superficial symptoms or denominators of the self.

In the previous chapter I discussed the first element of identity formation: historical and political processes that brought Lithuania to the state which it is now in. What also needs to be understood is how they are perceived and interpreted within the society. It will be shown how narrative and the imaginary that 'envelops' the perception of the political self is an essential part of any modern political identity. The overarching worldview, consisting of various images, embedded in a particular historical process and serving as a mythological background for modern collective understanding of self and the world, will be called *political cosmology*. Here *cosmos* is understood in the ancient Greek sense, as a lived world, a type of *Lebenswelt*, which is accessible through particular human experience and established common knowledge. [170]

In this chapter I will distinguish several elements that constitute the emergence of a new political cosmology in modern Lithuania. Firstly, I will discuss various images, which have been forming throughout the twentieth century as a result of a variety of historical and cultural circumstances. I will demonstrate how they constitute the perception of historical

[170] At the same time, the notion of political cosmology differs from the Greek perception of cosmos in that it does not claim to possess the truth about the world and order of things as they actually are, but rather to reflect the image of the political world as it reveals itself to the embedded actor.

time and political space, in which the Lithuanian 'self' exists, and how they influence both domestic and foreign politics.

Secondly, I will demonstrate the plurality of reflection upon this historical experience within Lithuanian society. I will introduce the notion of *tauta*, a name which the modern Lithuanians gave to their new national *persona* and show three different intellectual strandsin which this notion has been articulated.

Thirdly, I will look at the problem of authenticity of modern identity and will argue beyond the duality of constructed vs. authentic, introducing the idea of authentication – of the former turning into the latter through political practice. I will introduce the notion of identity formation as mask-making, where mask becomes an organic, authentic part of the "wearer" through the process of "wearing" it. This will conclude the establishment of the new political identity understood through, and embedded in, the political cosmology that sets the background and context for identity to be intelligible.

3.2 Lithuanian political identity-related historical images

The theoretical structure that this dissertation deploys in order to understand political identity formation is based on the assumption that political thinking and action is heavily based on factors other than calculative ones. This thought is not new and there are various ways in which this issue has been approached. One of those is the analysis of what is called political mythology. Probably the best known name in this field is that of Roland Barthes, who used a semiotic approach in an effort critically to analyse the non-factually based or irrational social phenomena that have political significance.[171] He continued Ferdinand de Saussure's line of inquiry, understanding myth as speech. What is lacking in Barthes's account is the inquiry into the existential, social and political meaning of these modern myths. The fact that myths comprise a certain language of images is one thing, but a more important question for our purposes is how it functions in the society and what is its significance for political identity formation.

Raoul Girardet suggested a typology of political myths and demonstrated their function and meaning for a society. He looked at four types of myths (the myth of conspiracy, of the saviour, of golden age and of unity) that are recurrent in French culture, literature and society. He noticed that these myths emerge in ambiguous situations of change, which he

[171]Barthes, *Mythologies*, 131 – 133.

calls "the crisis of legitimacy".[172] In his words, "[t]hese changes may happen due to various reasons: it could be an institutional turmoil, a removal of the entire governmental personnel after a legal or illegal accusation, a financial crisis, internal disarray, external threat, a military catastrophe […]."[173] Girardet concludes that the emergence of these modern myths is related to the resurgence of political religiousness in the modern world.[174] He observes that the myths (of unity, of a golden age, etc.) emerge in the place and time when the factuality of that which is represented by the myth is lacking.[175]

This idea points at another social factor: political imagination. As it will be shown, in the phenomenology of political life, especially in the times of political crisis, symbolical images become particularly important. Charles Taylor talks about social imaginaries that constitute the perception of a particular lived social and political environment. According to Taylor, a social imaginary acts as a background for a particular society in contextualising what is imagined as good or bad, desirable or justifiable. In other words, social imaginary is "that common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy".[176] The social imaginary aspect can thus create images of meaning, worth and authority in crisis situations when the established institutions of authority and relations of normality collapse. Putting the theories of the two authors together, Girardet's political myths are imagined meaning clusters in an overall network of Taylor's social imaginaries that compensate for the factuality with imagination. In this dissertation, I will call these half-factual, half-imagined meaning clusters *images* and demonstrate how they actually function in post-USSR societies, and how they influence actual politics.[177]

There are multiple archetypical, iconographic images that are embedded in the Lithuanian historical narrative and constitute the modern Lithuanian identity. In the interwar period, at the birth of the modern Lithuanian political nation, the main question of identity was existential – who are we? What does it mean to be a Lithuanian? Where do we come from? As discussed in the previous chapter, the answer to this question was first of all culturally

[172] In order to make this factor of crisis explicit and put it in a broader cultural and anthropological context I will use the concept of *liminality*. The idea of ambiguous, liminal crisis situation being the source of new identities and images in the society has been discussed by various authors such as Arnold van Gennep, Bernhard Giesen, Victor Turner, etc. (See: Gennep, *Rites of Passage*; Bernhard Giesen, *Intellectuals and the Nation: Collective Identity in a German Axial Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).; Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1967).) The importance of liminality will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.
[173]Girardet, *Politiniai Mitai Ir Mitologijos*, 117.
[174] Using the concept of *quasi-metaphysics*,I will elaborate on the topic of merging the political with the religious in identity formation as well as on its political implications.
[175]*Ibid*., 255-257.
[176]Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 23
[177]In the next chapter, I will also demonstrate the reverse process how through political practice, the imaginary turns into the factual and how this process results in the formation of political identity.

grounded and emerged in the form of various identity images. Many of these images had quasi-religious connotations. The interest in Lithuanian history at the time was scarce, which provided a fine soil for a type of identity-related, emotionally attractive national mythology to emerge.[178] The important thing is that despite the facto-graphic "truth", these images remain important to the Lithuanian identity. I will now discuss a few of these images and their meanings to Lithuanian identity narrative and distinct them into several different types.

Image of a person: Grand Duke Vytautas

Probably all national narratives have their historical heroes. The French have Charles de Gaulle, the Cubans have Che Guevara, the Irish have Daniel O'Connell, and the Americans have Abraham Lincoln. All of them have not only been historical figures, but have also been granted something like iconic status. Their characters are either adulated or demonised, their biographies distorted and adapted to fit the images and virtues they are supposed to represent. In Eliade's words, this is typical to the popular memory, which, instead of preserving the individual characteristics, converts them into exemplary ones.

The author gives an example recorded by a Romanian folklorist of an old rustic Romanian woman, who lost a fiancé when she was young. His death became mythologized, put into *illo tempore*, long ago, and various mythological creatures were related to the story, even though the same woman was still alive and told a different, more "prosaic" story of the event. However, "when the folklorist drew the villagers' attention to the authentic version, they replied that the old woman had forgotten; that her great grief had almost destroyed her mind".[179] Such mythological articulation of personalities and events can be observed in many different contexts and cultures. It is enough to mention the printing of Che Guevara's images on any mass-produced, supposedly anti-capitalist consumables or Abraham Lincoln axe-chopping vampires in Timur Bakenbetov's 2012's film to understand how historical personalities are represented as icons, not as factual persons, in our contemporary culture as well.

In case of Lithuania, as it might have emerged from the historical overview presented in the previous section, the brightest hero in the popular Lithuanian historical narrative is the grand duke and the most significant ruler of the GDL, Vytautas, according to Irena Šutinienė, followed by Mindaugas who established the Grand Duchy and gave the first

[178]Putinaitė, *Šiaurės Atėnų Tremtiniai. Lietuviškosios Tapatybė Paieškos Ir Europos Vizijos XXa.*, 21-68.
[179]Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965)., 44-46.

unsuccessful attempt to Christianise it.[180] Recent historical studies by Giedrė Mickūnaitė present a sceptical attitude towards the image of Vytautas. It not only reveals the pragmatic and not necessarily heroic political practice pursued by the grand duke, but also his own politics of public relations and efforts to create his own image, which was a common practice among the contemporary monarchs. Even more interestingly, grounded on the same facts of his political life, the opposite images could have been constructed by his adversaries: instead of depicting him as a great leader, he could be depicted as a tyrant.[181]

Either way, it is not the aim here to de-mask national heroes, but rather to emphasize two things: first, that history which actually influences politics is not necessarily factual or precise, which paradoxically makes these historical images yet more appealing and emotionally immersive; secondly, that it is important to recognise the meaning of this fact of 'iconification' for the formation of politics and political identity.

1. The opening ceremony of the statue for Vytautas, with Catholic priests and icons of saints (1930). (Žvirgždas 2002)
2./3. Images of Vytautas at the headquarters of *Sąjūdis*, Vilnius (Author's personal archive).
4. *Sąjūdis* meeting on 22nd -29th October, 1988. The banner says: "*Great Vytautas, Gediminas, Kęstutis* [Three Lithuanian grand dukes]*, we are with you, you are with us*". Picture at the headquarters of *Sąjūdis*, Vilnius. (Author's personal archive)

The importance of the figure of Vytautas in Lithuanian narrative is immense. Vytautas was called "Magnus", or "the Great" by possibly the most famous Lithuanian romantic poet and historian of the 19th century, Jonas Mačiulis, known as Maironis. In the interwar period, many monuments were dedicated to this mytho-historical figure, which would sometimes even be represented in quasi-religious form. The title persists in nearly all the

[180] See: Šutinienė, *Tautos Istorijos Mitai Lietuvos Gyventojų Sąmonėje*, 66-82; Šutinienė, *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės Paveldo Reikšmės Populiariosiose Tautinio Naratyvo Interpretacijose*, 102-120.
[181] See: Giedrė Mickūnaitė, *Making a Great Ruler: Grand Duke Vytautas of Lithuania* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006); Giedrė Mickūnaitė, *Vytautas Didysis. Valdovo Įvaizdis* [Vytautas Magnus. The Image of the Ruler] (Vilnius: Vilnius Art Academy Press, 2008).

Lithuanian historical narratives as well as in the popular culture.[182] Not only does it symbolise the Lithuanain pride, but it also embodies the modern, ethno-cultural conception of Lithuanianness. The fact can be observed when paying attention to how often the name is used in different instances of pubic life in Lithuania, from institution titles to products, etc. all of which are named after the grand duke. His figure can be also found at the headquarters of the Lithuanian independence movement *Sąjūdis*. The fact that the name of a leader of *Sąjūdis*, Vytautas Landsbergis, corresponds to that of the Grand Duke also resonated strongly within people during the independence movement.

Image of an event: Battle of Žalgiris

The most important historical event that Vytautas is associated with is the battle of Grünwald (or Žalgiris, in Lithuanian). The battle has become an important icon in other country's narratives as well.[183] However, the disagreement between the Lithuanians and the Poles as to which of the two cousins – Jogaila or Vytautas – played a greater role in leading the Polish and Lithuanian armies to victory against the Teutonic order is more representative of the international disagreements of the twentieth and the twenty-first century than the ones of the fifteenth century.[184]

To Lithuanians (as well as to Polish) the battle of Žalgiris is an archetype of a victorious battle. No wonder that two of the best basketball and football teams are titled Žalgiris. This image also invokes a political agenda of the 20th century. One of the most important historical episodes that relates to our topic is the legendary basketball match between Kaunas's Žalgiris and Moscow's CSKA in 1985.[185] This was a symbolic battle of David against Goliath. Žalgiris's victory was a strong boost in the Lithuanian determination to strive for independence. Nowadays, basketball is the most important sport in Lithuania,

[182] For instance, during the reign of Vytautas, the GDL reached the peak of its geopolitical power, geographically spanning "from sea to sea" (See chapter 2). The popular Lithuanian saying "*nuo jūros iki jūros*", or "from sea to sea" is still commonly used and refers to the historical period when the territories of the GDL reached from the Baltic Sea in the North to the Black Sea in the South in the third decade of the fifteenth century. It implies the glory and pride in the heritage of the GDL under Vytautas, and expresses the sentiment for the power once had and lost.

[183] There have been contesting opinions and ongoing disagreements, as to whom the credits for the victory in the Battle of Grünwald should be attributed to. D. Mačiulis, R. Petrauskas and D. Staliūnas present the varying claims by German, Polish, Belarussian, Lithuanian and Ukrainian versions as well as the historical contexts and ideological conjunctures that had influenced the formation of these interpretations. See Dangiras Mačiulis, Rimvydas Petrauskas and Darius Staliūnas, *Kas Laimėjo Žalgirio Mūšį? Istorinio Paveldo Dalybos Vidurio Ir Rytų Europoje* [Who Won the Battle of Grünwald? The Distribution of Historical Heritage in Central and Eastern Europe] (Vilnius: Mintis, 2012).

[184] Jogaila, according to historians, in our context representing the modern Polish identity, was the leader of the expedition and during the battle stayed in his tent whereas Vytautas, representing the modern Lithuanian identity, commanded the troops on the field.

[185]CSKA had the best players in the Soviet Union and due to the fact that Lithuania was striving for independence was politically inclined to win. The players in both teams were told that loss could in no way be accepted. After an exhausting match, ending up with traumas and draining the last of the players, Kaunas Žalgiris won. See the film *The Other Dream Team, DVD, directed by Marius Markevičius (San Francisco: The Film Arcade, 2013)*

popularly called its "second religion". There is therefore an intuitive connection between the image of Žalgiris, the existential battle against a much stronger, bigger force, religious elements and the post-USSR, independent Lithuanian political identity.

Images of 'others': Russia and Poland

Another question that has to be discussed when drawing a rough map of the post-USSR political mythology is the image of 'others'. Since the emergence of the ethno-linguistic, cultural articulation of Lithuanian identity, it has been situated between two main, bigger neighbours, both of which had influence on Lithuanian identity narrative: Poland and Russia. The latter, mostly due to the Soviet occupation as well as Russian imperial rule, is perceived by a large part of population as the archenemy and a constant threat to Lithuanian security, interests and wellbeing. This image was arguably one of the most important motivations for joining NATO and the EU.[186] It is not only evident from the academic research, but also from the abundance of publications in the Lithuanian press, as well as the overall atmosphere within the Lithuanian public.[187] It is important to distinct Russia from the Soviet Union. However, in terms of image, this is not the case. Russian Soviet soldiers led the occupation of the Baltic States, and the entire Union was ruled from Moscow.[188] The "international" language of the Soviet Union was Russian, and the contemporary regional politics of Putin's government in the post-USSR territories only reinforces the image. Here one can mention examples of Estonia, Georgia and most recently Ukraine as well as the open border policy with the former Soviet states in the Central Asia.[189]

[186] Arūnas Vyšniauskas, "Rusijos Įvaizdis Lietuviškuose Istorijos Vadovėliuose," *Politology (Politologija)* 26, no. 2 (2002).

[187] The threats discussed in the media range from repeated occupation or military aggression (See: "Ekspertai pateikė tris scenarijus, kaip Rusija gali pulti Baltijos šalis [The Experts Present Three Scenarios of Possible Russian Attack on Baltic Countries]", *delfi.lt*,http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/world/ekspertai-pateike-tris-scenarijus-kaip-rusija-gali-pulti-baltijos-salis.d?id=52582405, (Last accessed: September 28, 2013).) to threats related to double citizenship (See: "Įteisinti dvigubą pilietybę trukdo Rusijos grėsmė [Russian Threat Prevents from Legislating a Double Citizenship]", *valstietis.lt*,http://www.valstietis.lt/Pradzia/Naujienos/Lietuvoje/Iteisinti-dviguba-pilietybe-trukdo-Rusijos-gresme, (Last accessed: September 28, 2013).), etc., and especially in the context of Ukrainian crisis, which began in late 2013 and revealed Russia's aggressive international policy not only in Ukraine, but in the rest of the post-USSR Eastern Europe.

[188] Even though some Soviet leaders were non ethnic Russians (such as Khrushchev, Beria or Stalin, who, on the other hand completely resented the fact).

[189] See: "Deadly Riots in Tallinn:Soviet Memorial Causes Rift between Estonia and Russia", *Spiegel*, http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/deadly-riots-in-tallinn-soviet-memorial-causes-rift-between-estonia-and-russia-a-479809.html, (Last accessed: September 28, 2013); "Russia-Georgia War: Moscow's Loss?", *Chatham House*, http://www.chathamhouse.org/media/comment/view/193878, (Last accessed: September 28, 2013); "Между империей и национальным государством [Between an Empire and a National State]", *Nezavisimaya*, http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2013-06-24/9_democracy.html, (Last accessed: September 28, 2013).

Images, relating Russia with an occupier were present within the public consciousness during the times of independence movement. Similar kind of images could be seen in Kyiv, during the overthrow of former president Yanukovich (See Appendix 9).
1. A meeting in support for Lithuanian independence, 11/01/1990. A banner on the left depicts a tank on a pile of skulls with a title of USSR and a flag saying "friendship" in Russian. In the background, one of Kremlin's towers can be seen. (*Laisvės Sąjūdis*, 1998)
2. A meeting in support of Lithuanian independence, 1990 – 1991. A banner on the right says in Russian: "…motherland Russia… soldiers, go home, go home, to work your own land". (Juozas Kazlauskas' personal archive)

Lithuanians therefore always see Russia as a potential aggressor and a historical occupier, which, paradoxically, also created positive sentiments among a section of Lithuanian society, especially in times of economic crisis.[190] The latter phenomena became more evident when Russia illegally occupied Crimea, and some so called "St. George's ribbons" could be seen even in the streets of Vilnius. There is therefore a certain paradoxical love/hate relationship with the archenemy among the contemporary Lithuanian population, where the dominant and most widely supported narrative of independent post-USSR Lithuania clashes with nostalgia for Soviet times, often on the part of non-Lithuanian minorities.[191] However the fact that Russia is disposed against Lithuania as well is obvious

[190] "Prie Ruso Buvo Geriau? [Was it Better under the Russian?]", *delfi.lt*,http://pilietis.delfi.lt/voxpopuli/prie-ruso-buvo-geriau.d?id=61954783, (Last accessed: September 28, 2013).
[191]An interesting outsider review of the three Lithuanian places of commemorations, offering different perspectives on the Soviet era is published in The Guardian. (See: Dan Hancox, Lithuania's Soviet Nostalgia: Back in the USSR, *The Guardian*,http://www.theguardian.com/travel/2011/may/01/lithuania-soviet-nostalgia-theme-parks, (Last accessed: June 19, 2014).)

not only through the digital warfare it pursues, but also through public announcements by Russian political scientists.[192]

Poland, however, is a more complicated case. In one sense, Lithuania and Poland are both Catholic countries, with a long common history, which also extends to Belarus, Ukraine and other Baltic States. Especially before the plane crash near Smolensk in 2010, there were major efforts by the former Polish president Lech Kaczyński and Lithuanian president Valdas Adamkusto bridge the disagreements between the two states. Since then Polish-Lithuanian relations had been warming up.[193] On the other hand, after the tragedy, with a new Polish government in place, having a more strict view towards Lithuania, the relationship had been withering away. Nowadays, the aforementioned conflict after the First World War, as well as the formation of two distinct modern political identities drive a wedge between the two countries. And these Polish-Lithuanian tensions are usually related to the historical and linguistic ambitions. For instance, in August 2013, in the football match between Poznan's "Lech" and Vilnius "Žalgiris" football clubs, Polish football fans unrolled a 20-meter cloth in the stadium, saying *"Litewski chame, klenij przed polskim panem"*, which means "Lithuanian "cham" (a Polish derogative title that the gentry estate of *Rzeczpospolita* used to refer to their servants), kneel before a Polish "pan" (a member of the gentry)". This resonated with the political arena as well.[194]

[192] "Russian political scientist: If NATO attacks Syria, Russia should occupy Baltic States", *The Lithuania Tribune*,http://www.lithuaniatribune.com/48921/russian-political-scientist-if-nato-attacks-syria-russia-should-occupy-baltic-states-201348921/, (Last accessed: September 30, 2013).

[193] After the establishment of the LitPol Link company in 2008, a strategic energy project between Lithuania and Poland has been under way, aimed at connecting Lithuania to the Western European electric network through Poland. It was estimated that the new electric grid will start functioning in 2015. ("Strateginiai projektai elektros sektoriuje [Strategic Projects in the Electricity Sector]", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania*, http://www.urm.lt/index.php?3984444239, (Last accessed: September 30, 2013).)

[194] "Dėl Poznanės futbolo klubo Lech sirgalių plakato "lietuvių chame, klaupkis prieš lenkų poną " gali būti uždarytas miesto stadionas [A Stadium May Be Shut Downd Due to a Banner by Poznan Lech Football Club Hooligans, Saying "Lithuanian *Cham*, Kneel Before the Polish *Pan*"]", *15min.lt*,http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/sportas/futbolas/del-poznanes-futbolo-klubo-lech-sirgaliu-plakato-lietuviu-chame-klaupkis-pries-lenku-pona-gali-buti-uzdarytas-miesto-stadionas-24-360096, (Last accessed: September 25, 2013).

"Dėl Poznanės futbolo klubo Lech sirgalių plakato "lietuvių chame, klaupkis prieš lenkų poną " gali būti uždarytas miesto stadionas [A Stadium May Be Shut Downd Due to a Banner by Poznan Lech Football Club Hooligans, Saying "Lithuanian *Cham*, Kneel Before the Polish *Pan*"]", *15min.lt*, http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/sportas/futbolas/del-poznanes-futbolo-klubo-lech-sirgaliu-plakato-lietuviu-chame-klaupkis-pries-lenku-pona-gali-buti-uzdarytas-miesto-stadionas-24-360096,(Last accessed: September 25, 2013).

Underlying this disagreement are, once again, two different historical narratives. In between the two World Wars, when both Poland and Lithuania formed their modern nation-states, Polish federalists sought to re-establish itself in the spirit of the Commonwealth, whereas the Lithuanian modern nation created its own, ethno-linguistically based identity, and sought autonomy, venerating the pre-Commonwealth and pagan heritage of the GDL instead. The dissonance in a narrative has also gained political form, when in 1920 Polish military forces occupied Vilnius Region, which at the time belonged to the newly-formed Lithuanian Republic.[195] This has caused and perpetuated various primarily culturally based tensions between Poles and Lithuanians even nowadays.

Image of the beginning: Literary Mentioning of Lithuania

The next question we need to answer now is how is this interpretation of modern mask-identity and its formation important to the post-USSR countries, and namely – Lithuania? Let us take the date of the first mentioning of Lithuania in 1009 as an example. It signifies the first written mentioning of the Lithuanian name. It does not mean that the name appeared or that the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was formed on that date, nor does the date have anything directly to do with the political reality of the post-USSR Republic of Lithuania. No, someone just scribbled the name on a paper. And yet it is a celebrated date, the starting point of the narrative about the Lithuanian "us", and one of many images that constitute the sense of pride, collectivity and continuity.

According to Eliade, the myth of origins entails a perfect, exemplary form of existence that is to be reciprocated through the repetition of an archetype. In his words, "The idea implicit in this belief is that *it is the first manifestation of a thing that is significant and*

[195]Snyder, *Tautų Rekonstrukcija : Lietuva, Lenkija, Ukraina, Baltarusija, 1569-1999*, 57-60.

valid".[196] In our context, the celebration of the date refers to "the *Time of Origin*, which, as we have seen, is considered a "strong" time precisely because it was in some sort the "receptacle" for a *new creation*."[197] It legitimises the *raison d'être* of a Lithuanian state mythologically, having its "Time of Origin" as the existential foundation and pursuing the continuity of the tradition as a form of meaning creation.[198] Therefore the year 2009 was quite important for Lithuanians in various ways. Historically, it was the millennial anniversary of the birth of Lithuania as such, and the year was also chosen to declare Vilnius the European Capital of Culture. A large millennial cultural funding campaign has been associated with this date, dedicated to publishing a series of books about Lithuanian history and culture.[199]

This demonstrates the mythological role that a factually insignificant inscription plays not only in the national narrative (the national, again, being only vaguely related to the bare fact itself), but also in the economical and international politics. This factor thus remains important even in the twenty-first century, where the positivist and "myth-free" knowledge is supposedly extracted by means of the best rational, techno- scientific devices available. Even in this context, the phenomenon of mythologisation remains significant and should therefore not be disregarded, and resulting images should be better researched.

3.3 *Tauta*: three articulations of the same name

We have discussed the political and historical images that have formed over the period of the existence of modern Lithuania. These images comprise a certain world-perception and common social imaginary that unifies a group of human beings, part of which is existent, part of which is imagined, part of which is dead, another part yet to be born. The overarching image that unifies the entire debate is that of Lithuanian identity. Yet this identity is not homogenous or uniform. This section will explore the plurality in the articulation of what it entails, which, as it will be shown in the next chapter, is the source of various tensions as well as creative processes in modern Lithuanian society.[200] In this

[196]Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1975).
[197]*Ibid*.
[198]But the historical heritage of the GDL, however, is not only a myth of *Time of Origin* to a modern Lithuanian identity. It also plays a role in Belarussian historial narrative. Timothy Snyder, in his *Reconstruction of Nations*, has an entire chapter dedicated for the historical analysis of this particular question. See: Snyder, *Tautų Rekonstrukcija : Lietuva, Lenkija, Ukraina, Baltarusija, 1569-1999*, 15-105.
[199] See the list of over 400 cultural and academic publications, funded by the Directorate for the Commemoration of the Millennium of Lithuania here: "The List of Publications of the Comemoration of the Millenium Programme", *Directorate for the Commemoration of the Millennium of Lithuania*,http://www.lietuvai1000.lt/puslapeliai/leidiniai.htm, (Last accessed: January 13, 2015).
[200] In chapter five I will elaborate on the conflicting side of plurality of narratives in the process of identity formation, when discussing the case of Ukrainian crisis in 2013-2014. In that case the conflict takes place not

sense, the deliberative plurality of conceptions of what the collective political 'self' entails perpetuates the actual existence of the 'self', as the conception is reciprocated and is being identified with in new and creative ways.

The aim of this section is to demonstrate how varying and different intellectualstrands are at the same time separate and connected by the same historical narrative and political cosmology. Despite the ideological differences, through participation in the discussion, all of these intellectual strands participate in the creation of political and cultural Lithuanian *tauta*. A secondary aim in this section is to outline a historical and categorical context for the discussion in chapter four, where I will show how political images emerge and are being used in domestic as well as international politics, and how this influences identity formation.

Tauta as an ethical/cultural identity: the creation of a new self-image

The term *tauta* has already been mentioned several times. It is now time to understand what the notion entails. The modern Lithuanian nation of the nineteenth and the twentieth century, even though sharing the romantic heritage, was not born from the egalitarian liberation movement of citizenry and proletariat, as it was the case in the instance of, say, France. In the Lithuanian case one should talk about other unifying factors that melded the nation together. Instead of common struggle against economic inequality as well as against the monarchic sovereignty deriving from the divine source, the connecting factors were cultural: the common ethical (customary) and linguistic tradition as well as the territorial affiliation, which derived from the intimate agrarian relation with working soil and social imaginary surrounding the notion of homeland.[201] According to Vytatuas Kavolis, in the archaic, agrarian, pre-Christian Lithuanian perception (elements of which have remained long after the official Christianisation),

> there is an analogy between a human being and natural phenomena, human being is the same as the natural elements that surround him. These two separate when soul or rationality is ascribed to human being, which are not present in other natural phenomena, then the human being becomes radically different. Such perception can be found both in Greek and Christian traditions, but in the archaic Lithuanian strata, similarly as in Eastern Asian cultures, a human being is the same as the natural

only between different groups within the society but also outside of it. It thus envelops not one but several competing political cosmologies and influences not one, but several political identities.

[201] The imaginary has also been used in order to promote a particularly controversial call for a referendum in 2014. The referendum failed to raise the participant quota, but had it succeeded, it would have passed the law banning the sales of Lithuanian land to foreigners. (See: "Lithuania Land Sales Ban Referendum Flops", *Euractiv.com*,http://www.euractiv.com/sections/elections/lithuania-land-sales-ban-referendum-flops-303170, (Last accessed: January 13, 2015).)

> phenomena surrounding him, he experiences same things, he has the same spiritual foundation.[202]

One of the most important tasks and most topical issues to the interwar debates was the articulation of the new estate-free modern nation. In order to qualitatively distinguish it from the Western political nation (a social contract-based set of individual citizens of a state), I will call it in Lithuanian - *tauta*. *Tauta* was different because it was first of all understood as a cultural entity (division between politics and culture).[203] This was rather unique compared to the cultural crisis that the West was undergoing after the First World War:

> The period of Western disappointment with cultural achievements after the First World War in Lithuania coincided with the establishment of the national state. There was no "tiredness" from culture, which was characteristic to the contemporary Western cultural consciousness; it was not possible to radically question the meaning of culture. The most important real mission was not to set loose from culture, but to create it, to overtake and elaborate it. Finally, the very phenomena of cultural crisis did not manifest itself that clearly in Lithuania; or it manifested in a unique way.[204]

Secondly, it was understood in teleological terms – as having a purpose, a *telos*, but also being purposeful itself (romantic influence). This was thus not only a backwards-oriented conceptualization (which had started a few decades before the establishment of Lithuanian Republic), concerned with the 'revitalization of the nation', but also a teleological, forward-looking project of self-creation, self-development. Culture and in particular - national culture became one of, if not *the* most important pillar for the articulation and perception of Lithuanian 'selfness'.[205]

Thirdly, the prior two points can be better understood when taking in consideration that the creation of *tauta* was not an effort to 'create', articulate or recognize a new *ethnic* identity but a new *ethical* identity. By *ethical* I mean a cluster of rules, motivations, moral principles and meanings that would unify the people, at the same time being oriented towards some greater good, whatever that was perceived to be, not only (but not excluding) to represent political interests. This concept was and remains central to understanding the formation and character of Lithuanian political identity and identity politics. Indeed, when reflecting upon and discussing Lithuanian nation, instead of *nacija* Lithuanian thinkers used and still use *tauta*. Politics was understood as a result, a

[202]Vytautas Kavolis, *Moterys Ir Vyrai Lietuvių Kultūroje* [Women and Men in Lithuanian Culture] (Vilnius: Institute of Lithuanian Culture, 1992).
[203]Justinas Dementavičius et al., *Lietuvos Politinės Minties Antologija, I Tomas. Lietuvos Politinė Mintis 1918 – 1940 M.* [Antology of Lithuanian Political Thought, Volume 1. Lithuanian Political Thought in 1918 – 1940] (Vilnius: Vilnius University Press, 2012).
[204]Arūnas Sverdiolas, *Kultūra Lietuvių Filosofų Akiratyje* [Culture in the Eyesight of Lithunian Philosophers] (Vilnius: Apostrofa, 2012).
[205] Among other important unifying elements Lithuanian language, Catholic faith and agrarian ethics as well as the attachment to 'home soil' and nature should be mentioned.

contingent and natural outcome of an autonomous existence and activity of Lithuanian *tauta*.[206]*Tauta* can thus perhaps be perceived as the name that Lithuanians gave to their new political *persona.* While all the rest of Europe were in pessimistic cultural crisis, Lithuanian *intelligentsia* as well as that of some other Eastern and Central European countries were concerned with a constructive role and purpose of culture.

Three approaches to understanding tauta

I will now distinguish three major intellectualstrands in the modern Lithuanian intellectual debate in relation to political identity formation. All these approaches, however, have been commonly defining and articulating the notion of *tauta*, which, as it has been established above, was first of all a modern project of cultural, ethical and political self. Lithuanian intellectual tradition was very strongly focused on reflecting upon, articulating, preserving or even constructing the existential problematic of nationhood, 'Lithuanian-ness', selfness and identity. It started during the emerging period of the ethno-linguistic Lithuanian identity back in the Russian Empire. It continued being formulated as a modern national identity in between the war and during the Soviet Times, in the exile literature. Even after Lithuanians once again regained independence, this self-reflection remained a fundamental intellectual issue. After the establishment of an interwar Lithuanian polity, there were different visions, as to what the modern Lithuanian nation should be like.

The debate will be grouped into three main intellectualstrands: the *mythological establishment*,the *modern rationalist and materialist critique* andthe *culturalist and personalist alternative*. These approaches do not correspond to particular political groups within the society but rather signify three trajectories of thinking in the common and uncontrolled process of creating the articulation, the definition of what *tauta*, the modern form of being Lithuanian means. Having from different theoretical premises, emerged in the early twentieth century, they comprise the core body of thought about Lithuanian identity and have a continuation in the post-USSR Lithuanian political identity narrative as well, influencing contemporary ideological programs of political parties as well as shaping the political debate in general.

Mythological establishment

The oldest and most important organization, which could be associated with the establishment and articulation of the meaning of modern *tauta*, was called *Tautininkai*. They were most prominent and popularly supported in the interwar Lithuania, but also

[206]Dementavičius et al., *Lietuvos Politinės Minties Antologija, I Tomas. Lietuvos Politinė Mintis 1918 – 1940 M.*, 554-555.

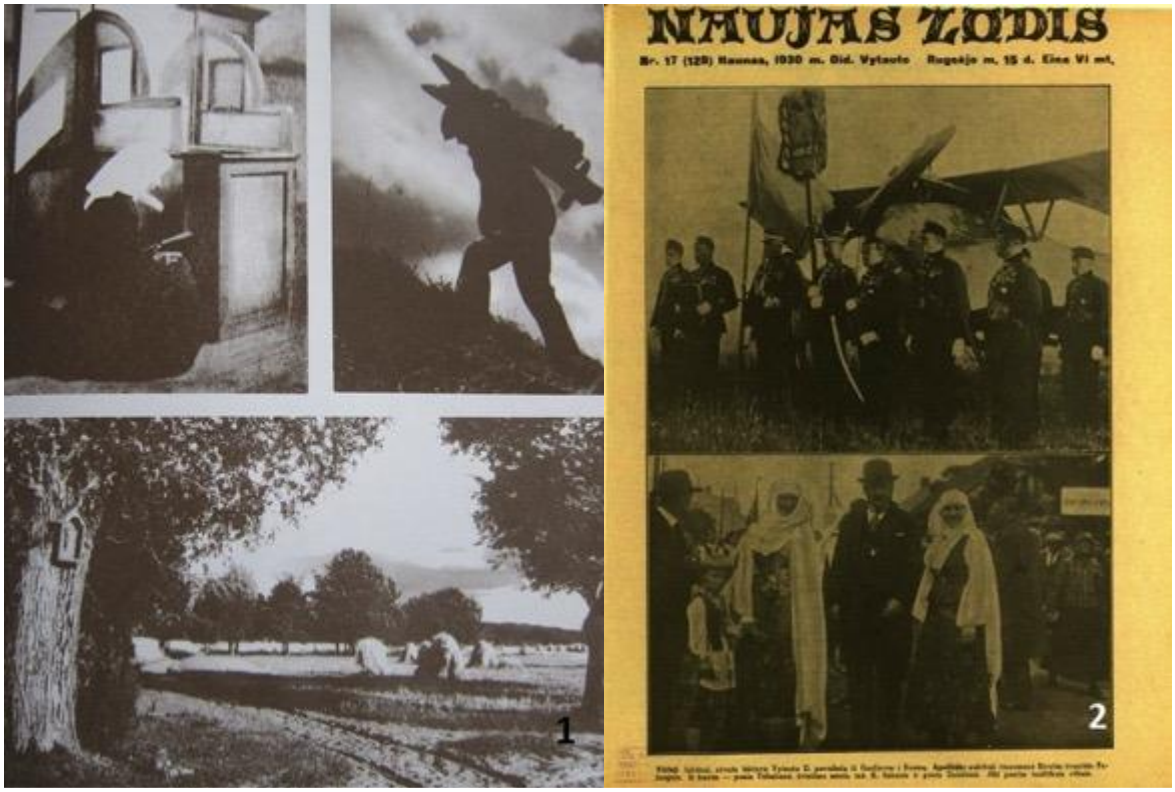
during the anti-Soviet independence movement. *Tautininkai* promoted collectivist political association and a centralised government. They argued for the historical continuity of Lithuanian *tauta*, from the mythological, ancient, pre-Christian times to nowadays, manifesting itself mainly through culture and language.[207] Identity was understood as culturally given, immanent and constituting the particularity of a nation. The political state was understood as a nation-state that plays a protective role, defending and fostering Lithuanian culture, continuing its ethical tradition. This is the oldest strand of thought, which emerged in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century.

The most important figure among *Tautininkai* became Antanas Smetona, who in 1926 took power by military means and established a mild authoritarian regime in a formerly democratic Republic of Lithuania. The main objective of the organisation was the prosperity of the nation state, which, was based on an ethnically, ethically and linguistically perceived *tauta*. *Tautininkai* were heavily influenced by the Herderian ideas and tried to express the unique Lithuanian spirit in various intertwining forms – political, ethical, artistic and others.

Being also influenced by ideas of Enlightenment, it was a secular movement. Instead of supporting the Catholic Church, *Tautininkai* promoted the reconstructed and stylised form of pagan culture instead as an expression of the national spirit.[208] Ironically, it assumed Christian forms of expression, whereas *tauta* itself was perceived a type of personified iconographic deity or spirit. In terms of historical narrative, *tautininkai* favoured the autonomous times of pre-Commonwealth, and even pre-Christian Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and emphasising the ethno-cultural relations between the pagan Lithuania, inter-war Lithuanian Republic and present-day Lithuania. This was done not only to express the particularity and "spirit" of the nation, but also to distinct it from the neighbouring ones, in particular from the Polish with whom Lithuanians had bloody conflicts over Vilnius region and the Russians, who were the long term occupiers.

[207] These factors had massive influence both on the role and importance of language in Lithuanian nationalist movement of the nineteenth century and the formulation of the modern Lithuanian cultural and political identity. Nowadays, the feeling of a certain type of cultural continuity lasting for many thousands of years remains a very important factor in Lithuanian self-consciousness, influencing not only self-identification but also Lithuanian internal (the proper use of Lithuanian language, i.e. Lithuanian grammar is literally protected by law) and external (the aforementioned tensions with Poland) politics. Language therefore not only means communication but also a part of the identity mask that constitutes the very foundation of the modern Lithuanian nation. See Rytis Bulota, "The Impact of Language and Culture on Sąjūdis," *Regional Studies (Regioninės Studijos)* 2 (2008), 183-192.

[208] It also has to be mentioned, however that theydid not oppress any of the religions either.



1. Three artistic interwar representations of 'Lithuanian spirit': contemplative prayer (reference to *Rūpintojėlis*), hard work (notice the cross-like burden on the man's back), homeland-countryside (notice the figurine of a saint on the tree to the left). Author: Albinas Stančiauskas. The titles: "A Prayer Before the Confession", "Through Little Crosses to a Better Being", "The Peaceful Lithuania". (Juodakis 1996)
2. The front page of an interwar Lithuanian newspaper *Naujasis žodis* [The New Word]. The picture above depicts interwar Lithuanian military pilots with a picture of a national hero Vytautas. The picture below depicts the Education minister K. Šakenis and two ladies of the contemporary elite, both in the national costumes. The picture was taken in the *Birutė festival*. *Birutė*, originally the name of the second wife of Kęstutis, grand duke of Lithuania (their forbidden love story, since Birutė was a priestess, became a popular interwar Lithuanian legend), in this case signifies one of Lithuanian cultural nationalist organizations of the late 19th to early 20th century. (Anonymous1930, 1)

Tautininkai as an organisation have marginalised. However the mythological intellectual position, which they were mostly associated with is still prevalent in Lithuanian political cosmology. This kind of understanding of Lithuanian nation is still most often taught in schools. Most of the aforementioned images have been forming within the spirit of *tautininkai* narrative and still influence the popular narrative. The reasons of contemporary popularity of this narrative can also be related to a "Lithuanian History" written by Šapoka, which, having been written in the neo-romantic atmosphere of the interwar Lithuania, was re-printed in 1989 and played a role in inspiring the Lithuanian national independence movement in the Soviet Union.[209]

Modern rationalist and materialist critique

Even though not very popular (possibly because of the scarce working class, as the villagers preferred a more Lithuanian culture grounded *tautininkai* strand), there was a social democratic thought in the Interwar Lithuania as well. The main topics this strand

[209]Vyšniauskas, *Rusijos Įvaizdis Lietuviškuose Istorijos Vadovėliuose*, 4.

was interested in, however were more economic and legal. They understood the state as a distribution organization, and emphasized economic issues that had little to do with the cultural notion of Lithuanian identity. It therefore did not have much of an impact on the popular image of Lithuanian political identity either.

Another "critical" school of historiography, however, was of bigger importance in the post-USSR Lithuania. It is currently gaining importance in Lithuanian academia.[210] In a Lithuanian context, it can perhaps be called the *critical* branch of thought. Using thorough historicist analysis, it seeks to "de-mythisize" Lithuanian history, cleansing it from empirically unsupported claims by the nationalist historiography. Nowadays, the articulations of Lithuanian political identity are becoming less 'primordialist' and secluded. This is also possibly the case due to a changed political situation. When in the interwar period the main aim for the modern Lithuanians was to foster own particularity, nowadays, due to perceived as well as real Russian threat and Euro-integration, the historical narrative is becoming more and more European in character. The main claim, as formulated by Gudavičius, is that Lithuanian history and identity is inseparable from the European history. In fact, Lithuania is understood as "the last coach of the European train."[211] Such an understanding of Lithuanian political identity rehabilitates the role of Christianity, attributing it a functional role in spreading Western Culture, not emphasizing the spiritual aspect. It also revises the Polish-Lithuanian Republic historical period, claiming its influence to Lithuanian culture and history.

Another, more rationalist (in a neo-Kantian sense) branch of this intellectual position towards the nature and contents of *tauta* is criticising the non-rationalist mythologizing character of the established narrative. In a similar way as the more socialist thought – inspired critical position mentioned previously, they seek to de-mythisize the *tauta*, emphasizing individual human rights, citizenship and the political side of what modern "Lithuanianness" means. Their articulation of political identity is more modernist and "enlightened".

[210]Edvardas Gudavičius and Alfredas Bumblauskas can probably be rightly called the main figures within this school of historiography. Its narrative is based on the Annalles tradition of historical materialism and civilizational theory. Bumblauskas is also influenced by *Jörn Rüsen's* theory of historical didactics, seeking to utilize historical narrative in order to educate people for one pragmatic purpose or the other. This school is located in Vilnius University's History Faculty, and has been gaining a growing popularity, especially among Lithuanian *intelligentsia*, especially, the younger generation.

[211] It is often illustrated by a fresco called "The March Towards the Cross" from Strasbourg's Saint-Pierre-le-Jeune Protestant Church where all European Christian lands are depicted as knights riding to Rome, including Lithuania, which rides the last. (See: "Virtual Historical Vilnius", *viv.lt*, http://www.viv.lt/nuotykis/lietuva_pasaulyje/7, (Last accessed: January 13, 2015).)

Culturalist and personalist alternative

The third branch of thought is perhaps less widespread within the wider contemporary public, but is influential in the academia as well as the younger generation of intellectuals. It will be called *personalist*. In the interwar period, it was concentrated among the Christian democrats and was marked by some of the most prominent and original thinkers in Lithuanian intellectual history (Antatnas Maceina, Girnius, etc.). Basing its position on the Christian values, the strand emphasized freedom of personality, culture and creativity as the most important for the development of the polity. The state was perceived as means of development for creative human beings, for personalities, and the collective nation was a cultural result of personal creativity. The agrarian experiential world perception in a modern intellectual political culture generated a symbiotic project of the "organic state". An effort to cross the Christian, metaphysical thinking, the agrarian "organic" ethics element with a modern political system.

The Soviet occupation, however, made sure this project never came to pass, and most of the best Lithuanian intellectuals were forced to leave the country. In the exodus, having been influenced by the Western intellectual trends, the strand took a more liberal turn, abandoning the religious aspect and emphasizing individuality and freedom. In Lithuania, however, this strand of thought has transformed into the Christian dissident movement, remaining the biggest bastion of intellectual resistance possible in the given circumstances. After the independence, having returned from the exodus, Western-educated children and grandchildren of the refugee Lithuanians were perceived by the post-USSR Lithuanians as pro-Western, pro-European, even though by then it assumed a more American liberal attitude. Nowadays, some Lithuanian academics have made efforts to revive the interwar Christian democratic thought, establishing a conservative narrative, deriving from the same culturalist, personalist and neo-Platonic intellectual position. In early 2013, an anthology of interwar Lithuanian political thought was published, with an emphasis on the mentioned strand of thought.[212]

3.4 Mask-making and authentication through participation

So far in this chapter, we have discussed two aspects of modern self-reflection in Lithuanian political cosmology: historical and political images and three different intellectual positions. Images are historical episodes that contain special, subjective

[212]Justinas Dementavičius et al., *Antology of Lithuanian Political Thought*, Parts 1-3, (Vilnius:Vilnius University Press, 2012–2014).

experiential meaning to the modern Lithuanian nation. These images play a role of a type of moral imperatives, of modern myths and quasi-religious reference points in a secularised modern world. They give meaning to experiences such as victories, suffering and struggle and unite those sharing the imaginary. They also provide answers to important existential questions about the self as a modern nation, which has no live ancient tradition or mythology to lend answers to these questions instead.

However, this imaginary, just as any other set of gnostic claims, is imperfect in that it does not contain absolute knowledge, only that, reachable through experience and reflection. It can be interpreted in many ways and it can resonate different human needs and existential as well as practical questions. Therefore distinct intellectual strands operationalise this knowledge about the self differently. They reflect different ways of using the historical images and present different *teloi*, existential and political aims and points of orientations for the modern nation. Together they render the image of *tauta* both actual and functional, providing meaning and purpose for the human organization of Lithuanian modern state.

The very difficult question that is important now, however, is that of authenticity. I have been repeating that the contemporary Lithuanian political identity is modern and that it has been forming since the late nineteenth century. It is not based on an ancient feudal or clan tradition. Various tragic historical events tore this tradition apart as well as continuously traumatized people, also affecting the culture. This would thus imply in some sense that the claims of heritage by the modern Lithuanian nation towards the medieval GDL or *Rzeczpospolita* as a historical source of its 'self-ness' is inauthentic, that Lithuanian identity does not or should not have a relation to the medieval Lithuania.

This is not at all the case, however. Not only does Lithuanian historical narrative claims ancient historical continuity – this continuity also exists experientially and functions politically. Even if not factually historical, even if the political identity of a Lithuanian or Ruthenian nobleman or of a Polish-Lithuanian member of the gentry of *Rzeczpospolita* is not factually the same as a citizenship of a modern Lithuanian, the continuity exists through historical narrative that constitutes an existentially important image of the self, the *tauta* of the present day Lithuanians. Not only that, but this quasi-mythological knowledge has political importance. It motivated the resistance against the regime, patriotic feelings, notions of self and the other as well as actual internal and external politics in the post-USSR Lithuania. We therefore need to inquire not into the empirical factuality of the identity narrative, but into its phenomenology.

Modern identity formation as mask making

Following from what has been discussed above, therefore, the process of identity formation can be understood as mask making, when mask is understood as the new, modern identity. However, mask in this context should not be perceived as something falsifying the reality or deceiving the viewer, not as something hiding the actual, but as something man-made, new and symbolic. This symbolic identity mask, however, through the historical process, as well as through lived experience of those participating in the process begins constituting the political reality.[213] Therefore, in order to understand identity better, one needs to understand being not as a uniform, logical "*a* or *b*", "*is* or *is not*" expression, but in a mytho-logical way, as transcending, multifaceted, semi-hidden and paradoxical. Identity in this sense, even if not based on historical, hard factuality, still functions and is important to the collective.

> A mask, this "object" then constitutes the possibility for an individual, for a group, for a society, to recognize itself in a being, by identifying with it (participating in its identity) – of founding such a being on its social presence. In this sense the mask constitutes the authentic being of those who participate in it: those who wear it, and here it will be one with their external appearance, their manifest presence; those who look at it, and it will be their cognitive representation that will entirely, in that moment before the mask, constitute and realize them.[214]

Such a metaphor allows for a different than rationalist articulation of political identity and unfolds its existential, not only nominal implications. Identity mask is at the same time the duplication of the self and authentication, all of which is conducted by participation in the social (political) and at the same time – historical process. Identity mask, the mythological 'self' is therefore required for participation in the real or authentic, the continuation of the cosmic, realisation of actuality, and affirmation of being oneself.

Modern political identity, therefore, can be understood as an identity mask, which is forged, worn, and through the embedded participation in the social or political, through time and practice, becomes an authentic part of the wearer and becomes its signifier. As Pizzorno puts it, "[i]f the mask is the face of death, stiff, turned into a thing, then it belongs to the immutable, to the identifiable; it will be identical to itself, to the being it represents, through time. Whoever stands before the mask will be in the presence of a being that is finally true to itself, that realizes its own self-identity. Such are the beings that belong to myth, or simply to the past, such are the ancestors".[215] Therefore once the identity becomes

[213] This aspect will be discussed in chapter 4.
[214] Pizzorno, *The Mask: An Essay*, 5-28
[215] *Ibid*., 10.

mythological, a part of political cosmology in a society, it authentifies.[216]

As I have already implied, however, mythology can be ontologically or factually misrecognised, imperfect. Just like in Plato's cave simile, certain sets of beliefs can be partially false or erratic. Yet they are some kind of refuge to a human, experiencing terror of the hidden, of the non-defined. It establishes the cosmological time and space, with reference to which a society can establish its political *persona*, conceive its 'interest' and identify its friends and foes.[217]

3.5 Conclusion

The main arguments, presented in this chapter are threefold. First of all, it demonstrates that the human perception of the space and time, of the self and the surrounding world is not precisely facto-graphic or calculative. Due to the historically and existentially embedded condition that every person and society that produces it is in, the political cosmology is rather mytho-logical, i.e. symbolical, archetypical and value-laden (not detached, not objective). Secondly, that it is not only reflected intellectually, but also experienced, which is precisely why politics, being "performed" by humans, is heavily dependent on the a-rational, ethical sphere of life, not only perceived interest. Finally, it argues that this is why political identity formation is a mythological act, which may be better perceived as an allegorical mask-making process.

There are political intellectual and experiential reasons why Lithuanian identity has been articulated in the way it has. Among the most important are, first of all, continuous foreign threats throughout the twentieth century to Lithuanian cultural identity, which invoked a certain protective attitude towards identity; second, western influences on the émigré intellectuals; third, the Soviet experience that included social engineering, cultural dictatorship, enforced atheism and materialistic world-perception.

Through the historically experienced process itself, the participation, the lived action, through things happening and influencing lives, new forms, new identities become authentic within lived context. This happens because through practice, the identity merges with the self. Identity mask, through experiencing it, becomes part of authentic imaginary. In the next chapter I will observe this process of becoming, of authentication of the new

[216] While at the same time instantly creating a tension that arises from a critical, philosophical inquiry, which the mythological, things believed in have been invoking in human minds since and before Socrates.

[217] The inherent ontological inauthenticity, however, leaves the modern being in a constantly fluid, constantly dynamic, non-defined, heterogeneous existence, as suggested by Bauman, a permanent *crisis* situation. Indeed, modernity in some sense is a permanent liminality. The latter idea by Árpád Szakolczai will be elaborated on in chapter 7.

identity mask in the case of Lithuanian struggle for political independence from the Soviet Union.

CHAPTER 4. Lithuania: liminal transition and identity formation

4.1 Introduction

As mentioned previously this dissertation analyses the process of modern political identity three levels: political (understood in terms of power politics and factual events), experiential and intellectual. In other words, identity emerges from a hard, real embedded participation in the political process, while experiencing it in a human way and reflecting upon it intellectually, which involves explaining what is taking place, applying theories and also creating myths. The intellectual 'product', a cosmological conception about the political self and the world, is based on the experience of particular factual, embedded historical processes or events, which constitute the historical narrative. But how does factuality turn into cosmology? How does "objective", reality, that which actually happens turn into a narrative? The answer lies in the fact that any political process, in order to be reflected upon, has to be approached through the human prism, consisting of both experience and rational reflection, which gives meaning to these events and thus already conveys an imaginary element. This chapter will explore the particular case of the Lithuanian independence movement to conceptualise this human experiential level of the process.

Harald Wydra discusses the emergence of the myth of democracy in post-Soviet Eastern and Central Europe, claiming that the mythological representation of Western democracy emerged in the region as a reaction to the experience of the oppressive and totalising regime of the Soviet Union. He refers to Eric Voegelin's claim that "the emergence of second reality [mythologisized political worldview] is tightly linked to how man's consciousness is transformed in response to pervasive uncertainty in crisis situations".[218]The two previous chapters examined two out of three of the above-mentioned elements of identity formation. Chapter two analysed real historical events, which shaped the political reality, thus directly influencing the lives of the contemporary and the future generations. Chapter three dealt with the reflection of these events as well as their outcome – a certain imaginary-laden historical narrative that through political process constitutes the formation of a modern identity mask. In this chapter, the main goal is to 'bridge' the gap between the established understanding of politics as actual historical events and the intellectual reflection of political self in the world by elaborating upon the

[218]Harald Wydra, "The Power of Second Reality: Communist Myths and Representations of Democracy," in *Democracy and Myth in Russia and Eastern Europe*, eds. Alexander Wöll and Harald Wydra (London: Routledge, 2008), 60-63.

third element, namely human experience. It will do so by observing the rendition of the factual political and historical events into mythological imaginary that comprises political identity, through the instance of the Lithuanian independence movement of 1988-1991 and its aftermath.

The sources used for this analysis of experience are threefold. First, articles in the contemporary cultural press, gathered in the BA thesis were re-visited and reviewed. These report and reflect the impressions of those participating in the discussed process. The cultural press, especially the newspapers *Šiaurės Atėnai* [North Athens] and *Literatūra ir menas* [Literature and Art], among others, constituted at that liminal time the main media for articulating identity-related debate as well as for reflecting the contemporary events by the driving force of the independence movement – the Lithuanian *intelligentsia*. Secondly, the literature on the topic will be used, which even though had been written after a certain period of time, holds a lot of information about the world-view and human experience of those participating in the events. Finally, contemporary documentary photography will be used, in order to achieve two goals: to convey convincingly the experience of the events that took place at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s in Lithuania, as well as to demonstrate that what was articulated in the literary sources were not merely opinions of *intelligentsia* but that it also reverberated in the wider public. The most eloquent in those pictures are the banners that Lithuanians held in meetings and demonstrations, as they concisely convey what the people holding them thought felt and stood for as well as against. Pictures, drawn by children, conveying what they have been told by the adults, taught in schools and nursery schools and/or saw themselves are also referred to. Because I was one of these children who grew up under these circumstances, I have a personal relation to the events and experiences discussed, which is useful for the empathic method that is being used in this thesis. It is also useful for picking the experientially important episodes and nuances while discussing the issue.

The first section of this chapter will provide a brief overview of the historical, social, cultural, and experiential context, in which the independence movement or *sąjūdis* emerged. Political, economical and existential crisis of the mid-eighties in the Soviet republic of Lithuania and the variety of contexts that acted together for the movement to happen. The second section will illustrate claims above by discussing the case of Lithuania's post-Soviet transition. Experiences of those living through the mentioned process will be discussed, claiming the importance of this experience both to political identity and future politics. Central to this issue is the concept of liminality and its political implications. The aim of this section is to grasp the complex process of transition, of

becoming, of being in between. By 'becoming' I not only mean the formation of a new state, but also the 'authentification' of the imaginary that constitutes the 'selfness'. In doing so, political transition can be perceived as an existentially transformative liminal event as much to a state as to the nation and the individual person. The third section will present the circumstances, in which the political struggle for independence becomes a mythological and existential act, motivated by iconified imagines of the West and that of the USSR, as well as by the prior historical imaginary. Finally, I will discuss how this imaginary, the new experience as well as the new identity mask influence the post-Soviet politics in Lithuania after the independence movement. I will pay particular attention to the experience of the so-called *January events*, as a showcase for the process of mythologisation of traumatic experience and the constitution of identity on this new historical imaginary.[219]

4.2 *Sąjūdis* and *sąjūdis*, 1987-1991

The exact date of the Lithuanian independence movement, also popularly called *sąjūdis*, is difficult to establish. Various events in the late 1980s can be associated with the initiation of the new line of thinking, living and action within the Soviet Lithuanian society, which later took shape of an independence and actual organisation called *Sąjūdis*.[220] The name *Sąjūdis*, in Lithuanian means 'the beginning of a common movement'. The word is often used in two senses. In a broad sense it marks the Lithuanian movement for the independence from the Soviet Union in general. In a narrow sense it is the title of an organization, which lead this movement and constituted the first High Council of the newly formed Lithuanian Republic. The organization is still existent, and its headquarters remain opposite Vilnius Arch-cathedral, in the centre of the capital. The name, however, is taken from the post-occupational Lithuanian guerrilla independence movement, which was part of Lithuanian resistance against the Soviet regime.

Very many spheres of life, such as music, politics, religion, arts, sports and ecology among others, all fed into the general political movement that was gradually taking shape. A newly published collection of works, edited by Jūratė Kavaliauskaitė and Ainė Ramonaitė is probably the most comprehensive and serious piece of work on the topic.[221] In the book, apart from other things, the authors demonstrate the variety and extent of interconnecting

[219] See appendices 5, 6, 7 and 8 for illustrations.
[220] The prefix '*su-*' in this case signifies the beginning of a collective action and '*judėti*' means to move, a movement.
[221] Jūratė Kavaliauskaitė and Ainė Ramonaitė, *Sąjūdžio Ištakų Beieškant: Nepaklusniųjų Tinklaveikos Galia* [In Search for the Source of Sąjūdis: the Power of the Non-obedient] (Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 2011).

social organizations – unofficial gatherings, initiative groups, from various fields and specialisations, all working in a conscious and unconscious unity resisting the regime. The editors claim "that *Sąjūdis* could not have emerged from Soviet society. It emerged in the *non-Soviet* society."[222] It is arguably this "non-", the negation of the existing reality, that initiated the future transformation.

Sources of the movement

(Above) The very first meeting of a small crowd to condemn the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact in Vilnius, near the statue of Adam Mickiewicz (1987). Those who attended were in high risk and had no idea, what will happen to them afterwards. The photograph on the picture on the right shows Stalin, Molotov and Ribbentrop at the signing of the infamous pact. (*Lietuvos laisvės sąjūdis*, 1998, 10-15)
(Below) *Roko Maršas* in Tauragė, 1987 (it also took place in 1988 and 1989). The elderly lady, sitting on the shoulders of the youth holds the Lithuanian flag. From the very beginning it was clear that this was not only a music event, and that is what united different generations. (Sutkus, 2000, 119)

First hints of broader public dissident sentiments could be seen during the events like *Roko Maršas per Lietuvą* [Rock March across Lithuania], the gathering in condemnation of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (which later became a very important part of the imaginary of the independence movement) in 1987 and other factors of various importance.[223] However by that time no one could realistically consider a possibility of independence. The hopes

[222] *Ibid*., 406.
[223] Rock Marches across Lithuania were "unprecedented musical events which took place between 1987 and 1989. Rock groups performed their own music for thousand-strong audiences. The festivals followed traditions of the democratic world: the performers expressed their own attitude to what was happening in the country. The first march took place in 1987, which was a freedom march of young people and rock music. The last two festivals were more politicised. The 1988 rock march became a platform for the ideas of the Sąjūdis Revival Movement and the Greens, while in 1989 the closure of the Soviet military bases and plants was demanded, and the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact was mentioned. Part of the proceeds from the concerts went to support public organisations (in 1987, the Lithuanian Culture Fund, in 1988, the Lithuanian Revival Movement, and in 1989, the Lithuanian Society for the Disabled). Over 150,000 people attended the three rock marches". (Birutė Kuklytė, "Roko Maršai Per Lietuvą 1987–1989 M. Žvilgsnis Į Dainuojančią Revoliuciją," *Genocidas Ir Rezistencija* 23, no. 1 (2008), 76.)

were generally orientated towards seeing at least some sort of change in life conditions broadly speaking. Change was desperately needed, as it was evident, even if whispered among people, that by 1984, "[…] the Soviet Union reached its economical bottom. Nothing is happening. There is nothing."[224] Yet the official political forms were strictly in place, and punishment was more than likely to fall upon those who transgress the ritual.[225] Wydra put this well: "[i]n the absurd world of post-totalitarianism under late Soviet communism the emperor was naked, but kept citizens in a ritualistic circle of compliance and self–censorship. The true endeavour to be accomplished was to break self-censorship by attempting to overcome the corruption of everyday life."[226] It therefore required bravery, desperation and change in the political climate Union-wide for *sąjūdis* to commence.

At first the movement was partially a game – unplanned, without clear expectations, and only within the unfolding process did it take its ultimate form and began pursuing its political programme.[227]*Sąjūdis*, the leading organisation of the independence movement, was born as a pro-Gorbachev local initiative, in line with *perestroika*. In the first meeting of *Sąjūdis*, which marked the establishment of its Initiative Group on 24 June 1988, many Gorbachev's, and even Lenin's portraits were held by the crowd. Very rapidly, however, it evolved into an anti-regime and pro-independence movement, which gained the support of a vast popular majority.

(Butkutė, 2013, 21.)

[224]*Kaip Mes Žaidėme Revoliuciją, DVD, directed by Giedrė Žickytė (Vilnius: Just A Moment, 2011)*
[225] See pictures of Brezhnev-time Lithuania in Appendix 3.
[226]Wydra, *The Power of Second Reality: Communist Myths and Representations of Democracy*, 60-63
[227]*Žickytė, Kaip Mes Žaidėme Revoliuciją*

Above is a picture from the *Sąjūdis Initiative Group* establishment meeting in 24th June 1988. Only a few Interwar Lithuanian flags appeared, even though one of the banners in the picture already declares a dream-like vision: "Free Lithuania – in the family of European nations". Plenty of Gorbachev's portraits and even one depicting Lenin are being held. The speed at which the imaginary and self-articulation of the movement was developing can be grasped if we compare the picture and the amount of *tauta* and national vs. USSR symbolic above to the one below. The latter picture was taken in the meeting on 7 July 1988, less than two weeks after the events above. The banner below says in Lithuanian and Russian: "For your and our freedom".[228]

(Butkutė, 2013, 28.)

The main forms of action that *sąjūdis* employed to reach for its aims were massive, often non-sanctioned meetings with banners and interwar Lithuanian flags as well as other national symbolic (forbidden by the regime). Part of the dissident press, such as *Sąjūdžio žinios* [*Sąjūdis* News] was spread from hand to hand and other part, such as *Literatūra ir menas* [Literature and Art] were officially approved periodicals. Political rituals, such as crowd singing (mainly of the harmonized versions of Lithuanian folk songs), politicised procession-like demonstrations, the "Blatic Way" and others were also taking place.[229] Next to it, rock concerts, environmentalist, and other cultural and social movements were also active and influential to *sąjūdis*.[230] This is also true for the Catholic Church,

[228]Onutė Butkutė, ed., *Fotografas Romualdas Urbonavičius. Atgimimo Kronika 1987-1993* [Photographer Romualdas Urbonavičius. Chronicles of Rebirth 1987-1993] (Vilnius: Lithuanian National Musemu, 2013).

[229] 'The Baltic Way' was a protest campaign across the Baltic States in 1989, when approximately two million Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians joint hands creating a 675,5 kilometre long human chain from Tallinn to Vilnius, in commemoration of Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. See Appendix 5 for pictures.

[230] Probably the most important rock band, whose lead singer, Algirdas Kaušpedas was also a member of the *Sąjūdis* Establishment Comity, was *Antis*. The name literally translates as "a duck". In Lithuanian, however, the word can also mean a piece of false news, usually in the press, a provocation, a hoax. This could (or

Lithuanian neo-pagan as well as other religious movements such as the Krishnaites, the Buddhists as well as many Christianity-based spiritual denominations and sects. At that time, they had been spawning across the Soviet Union and arrived in Lithuania yet again infused with inauthentic cultural codes, all of which were officially forbidden by the regime. In retaliation, the Communist Party put efforts to contain the movement via cultural propaganda and initiation of its own social movements (such as *Yedinstvo*, "unity" in Russian). Western cultural influence, on the other hand, was being less and less restrained. Gorbachev's political line, internationally imitating 'human face' (although the last exiles from Lithuania to Siberia took place in 1988) tied the dictator's hands to pursue more radical repressions in order to take control of the situation.

One of the leading figures of *Sąjūdis*, Arvydas Juozaitis, acknowledged that the organization was using the opportunities offered by Gorbachev's politics: "[Sąjūdis] was born – and that is the only reason why it was born – as a chance to change the USSR and as a sign of the weakness of the Empire. It was based on M. Gorbachev's politics and was using it at the same time. Another thing is that we went down our own path – and did it very quickly."[231]

Experience and transition

All of the mentioned elements, along with many others – various personal motivations and actions, emotional charge and overall lack of any kind of structure in what was happening during the last years of the Union's existence – created a surreal liminal "Alice in Wonderland" experience, as Arpad Szakolczai would call it, "a situation where almost anything can happen".[232] The surreal atmosphere of the epoch was well represented by a Domantas Vildžiūnas's film *Tikras garsas valstybės atgimimo 1989-1993* [The Real Sound

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could not) have referred to the false news in the Soviet official newspapers, such as *Pravda* ['truth' in Russian], which, in fact, indeed contained very little factual truth. Officially, the name could not be accused of any anti-Soviet connotations, yet unofficially, anyone who speaks Lithuanian understood the intentional meaning in an instant. In the Soviet reality, according to Leonidas Donskis, the joke of *Antis*, which was entirely concentrated on ridiculing and uncovering the absurdity of the regime and of life under these surreal conditions, gradually became a political phenomenon, a transformative force. "The epoch itself encouraged duality, non-reality, and you could understand that a certain conspiracy between an artist and the public exists. That is why it was easy for *Antis* to play with these double meanings: the people were ready, they knew how to read double meanings. They knew how to understand hints. They had learned the language of hints." (*Žickytė, Kaip Mes Žaidėme Revoliuciją*) *Antis* were not the only artists to use this kind of language – it was rather a norm than an exception across the USSR. It shows the schismatic/cynical nature of Soviet public politics, which later also translated into post-Soviet politics: the non-authenticity lays in the inadequacy of the post-Soviet political forms in relation to their content, or practice in relation to the ideology/mythology. I will elaborate this thought in later chapters.

[231] "Filosofas, rašytojas A.Juozaitis: Sąjūdžio galima ilgėtis kaip jaunystės [A Philosopher and Writer A. Juozaitis: You Can Miss *Sąjūdis* Like You Miss Your Youth]," *respublika.lt*, http://www.respublika.lt/lt/naujienos/nuomones_ir_komentarai/bus_isklausyta/filosofas_rasytojas_ajuozaitis_sajudzio_galima_ilgetis_kaip_jaunystes, (Last accessed: September 1, 2013).

[232] Szakolczai, *Liminality and Experience: Structuring Transitory Situations and Transformative Events*, 141-172: 148.

of the Rebirth of the State 1989-1993]. A compilation of documentary material from the period of 1989-1993 reveals the multi-faceted and heterogeneous condition, in which Lithuanian society lived over the period in question. It is in this liminal condition, where the old political structures, even though present in form, were dysfunctional and deteriorating content-wise, that the new Lithuanian political cosmology was gradually taking shape.

It would be unfair to say, however, that the narrative emerging within the process was an intentional power projection of the elites, as Richard Sakwa sees it in the case of Russia.[233] As mentioned earlier, the Establishment Committee of *Sąjūdis* was elected spontaneously, out of those who were believed to be the best for the position (whatever the perceived criteria could have been). It consisted of cultural figures – writers, philosophers, etc. (Vytautas Landsbergis is a professor of music history), not contemporary nomenclature (except for Algirdas Brazauskas, who, on the other hand, did not have that much influence in terms of political imaginary formation, except for his own image). Furthermore, the claims for independence that resonated through the Lithuanian society were popular, but they were not populist – they were existential, even if induced by a certain cosmology. It is only after the attaining the independence that the political agendas and images related started to split, showing its pragmatic teeth. However it is important to emphasise once again an important fact that the independence movement in Lithuania was led by the cultural and intellectual elite, which had great influence to its peaceful character.[234]

Before the independence, however, herd instinct would not have been a sufficient motivation to go to meetings and participate in the independence movement. Had the regime tightened its grip once again, the cost of political resistance would have been very clear to anyone living in the Soviet system. The understanding of the danger was reinforced by Gorbachev himself, on his numerous threatenings with "blood and death".[235] The majority of those who understood the seriousness of the situation and decided to participate must have made a conscious choice – an act that was a rarity in the Soviet political culture. And it was this determined political choice, as well as faith in the image of independence, among other factors, that led the Lithuanians to the declaration of independence, signed on 11 March 1990.

[233] See the book chapter by Richard Sakwa:Richard Sakwa, "Myth and Democratic Identity in Russia," in *Democracy and Myth in Russia and Eastern Europe*, eds. Alexander Wöll and Harald Wydra (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 203-218.

[234] Many intellectuals at that time were deeply influenced by Eastern philosophy which started to become accessible, especially Ghandi's ideas of refusal of violence.

[235] *Lithuania and the Collapse of the USSR, video, directed by Jonas Mekas 2008).*

The signing of the declaration was not the final point of the Lithuanian struggle for the independence, however. Practically, the separation from the Union took longer. The Soviet army was still present in Lithuania, whereas Lithuanian volunteer-based police and military force was only gathering.[236] The state was not recognized internationally in broader sense until after the putsch in Moscow in August 1991.[237] The institutional structure had to be established as well: the state had no parliament, no constitution, no government or president, only the temporary High Council. These, however, were only superficial, material changes. The real shift was taking place in the minds of the people, most of whom for the first time in their lives could actually call themselves politically free, if not yet independent.

"Independent, free, non-Communist Lithuania" (Source: Photograph on the wall of *Sąjūdis* headquarters)

This experience was particularly strengthened by the "January events", which will be discussed in more detail below. During these events the imaginary of the independence movement actualised and materialised. The real crowd of Lithuanians, defending 'the good' (images of freedom, truth, justice, Western and national culture, Christian ideals and respect for individuality/personality), resisted and won against a much stronger enemy – a Soviet army, which at the time symbolized all the possible 'evil' (terror, repression, lies, exiles, violence, crude atheism, russification, defacing/molding collectivism and much more). This is why to those participating, *sąjūdis* was not only a political struggle, but also

[236]See the Appendix 4 for pictures of the Lithuanian volunteer military and police forces in the early nineties.
[237] Prof. Bronislovas Kuzmickas, who acted as a diplomat during the time of *sąjūdis*, recalls in his memoirs how "[w]e were waiting impatiently till at least one, it does not matter which one state would make a start and acknowledge Lithuanian independence. It was also not difficult to understand that the state, which will be the first to acknowledge Lithuanian independence will draw Moscow's immense wrath, it would take up a heavy burden of responsibility for the complications, in case Moscow disrupted the practical realization of the acknowledgement". Quoted in: Bronislovas Kuzmickas, *Išsivadavimas: Užsienio Politikos Epizodai 1988-1991* [The Self-liberation: Episodes of Foreign Policy in 1988-1991] (Vilnius: Apostrofa, 2006). The first acknowledgement came from Iceland on 11 February 1991, which, one may assume, was not all that concerned with Moscow's reaction. Nowadays, Iceland is highly liked among Lithuanians, having become a part of the post-Soviet Lithuanian identity narrative. There is an Iceland street in Vilnius, named to commemorate the occasion.

an existential, politically eschatological battle of life or death. What was at stake for those participating in the events of 13th January 1991, as well as in the independence movement overall, therefore, was not only political, but something much more profound. It is therefore important to take a closer look at the main themes in this political discussions and human experience, which will help understand the inner motivations for the mentioned imaginary that shaped the new Lithuanian identity mask to emerge.

4.3 The dominant experiential themes of Lithuanian independence movement

From the contemporary discussions in the cultural press as well as from the visual material gathered, four main experiential themes stand out. It is around them that the contemporary political imaginary gravitates. These themes can be seen as the motivational forces for pursuing political ends and justifying political action. They are, first of all, a sense of victimisation'; second, the surreal and liminal experience of independence; thirdly, the images of the East and the West; finally, the actualisation of these images through political practice. In order to see this and understand why this happened, we need to take a closer look at the human experience and the inner motivations of the contemporary Lithuanian public. This will also give us an insight into the Lithuanian identity-related imaginary within *sąjūdis*, which was also influential in the formation of the post-Soviet Lithuanian political culture, the political and historical imaginary as well as identity politics.

Suffering and victimisation

Probably one of the most influential themes in the resistential discussions of 1987 to 1991 is that of suffering and victimization. In condemnation of Stalinist repressions, Gorbachev's government publicised formerly secret information about the exiles of Lithuanians during the dictator's governing years. Many survivors of the exiles or their children, already conceived in the exile, returned to Lithuania and brought back their own shattering stories.[238] On top of that, some facts about the operations by the NKVD and the KGB were revealed due to the *glasnost* policy. This came as a massive shock to the Lithuanian population, as even though everyone was well aware of the repressions taking place in the Soviet Union, especially during Stalin's reign, the scale of these repressions was publically unknown.

The main themes that resonated most within the Lithuanian population, were the above-mentioned exiles to Siberia and GULAG working camps, the Lithuanian anti-Soviet

[238]See appendix 4.

guerilla reistance movement and the cultural and linguistic repression (censorship, russification and religious prohibition). These were the sources of experience for the new independence movement imaginary to emerge, both visually and in written word, which was evident in the contemporary Lithuanian popular political culture.

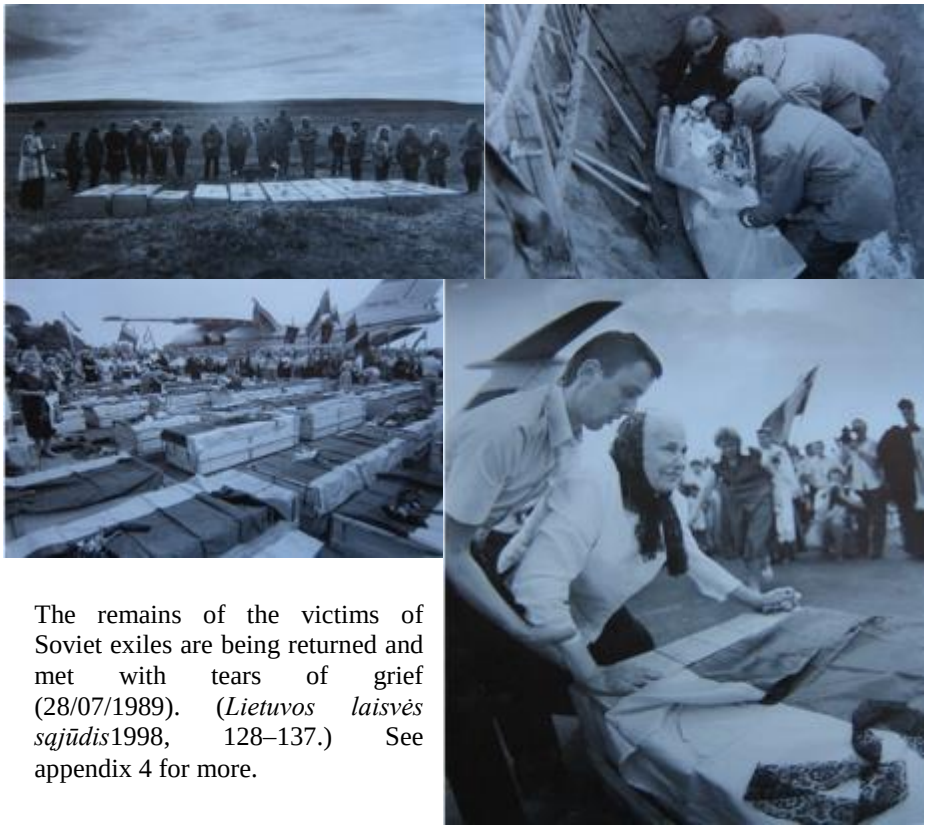
A map of Soviet Union with black triangles marking places of imprisonment (GULAG's) and dots marking places of deportation, into which around 180 000 (out of less than 3 mln in total) Lithuanians have been exiled during the period between 1940-1988. This map not only shows the extent of the trauma that the Soviet exiles caused to Lithuanians (there has been nearly not a single family in Lithuania that had not suffered from this), but it also can give an insight into the psychological effect that the revelation of these long hidden and denied extent (even if strongly decreased in numbers officially) had to the Lithuanian population in the late eighties. (Source: Lietuvos gyventojų tremties ir kalinimo vietų Sovietų Sąjungoje 1940-1988 m. žemėlapis (Juodvalkytė-Suščenkienė 2001)

In her psychological analysis of the traumatic experiences of the Lithuanian *tauta* during the Soviet occupation, Danutė Gailienė discusses the multi-faceted, indirect destructive effect not only of the repressions but also of the communist social and political experiment in general:

> First of all, the Soviets induced great harm to the institution of the family. Because of the constant double-lives that the people of the regime were forced to lead (i.e. publically declaring and living by the official set of values, despite not believing in them privately and in smaller circles), the family lost its very essence. Instead of being the initial place of education and upbringing, as it is in normal societies, it now became a cover for forbidden values and stories, which were later contradicted an denied in public both by family members themselves and the representatives of wider and especially more official society, like school teachers and bosses at work. Next, one can observe direct effects on public health on the post-Soviet Lithuanian

society: alcoholism, high suicide rates, increased rates of premature and violent deaths.

Another result of living in an abnormal society is the moral trauma. Life by moral double standards eventually affects the personality and his or her deepest values. Even today one can observe many forms of Soviet mentality and habits developed during the regime.[239]



The remains of the victims of Soviet exiles are being returned and met with tears of grief (28/07/1989). (*Lietuvos laisvės sąjūdis*1998, 128–137.) See appendix 4 for more.

Even though those who have not experienced the Soviet reality could perhaps disagree with Gailienė on the claim that the 'Soviet mentality and habits' is an a priori negative thing, it is nevertheless true that the extent of the injustices that the Soviet regime brought upon Lithuanians and other occupied as well as non-occupied nations is hard to measure. The first reason is because of the unquantifiable nature of Soviet actions. Any effort to do this would lead to inherent cynicism, similar to that, expressed by Stalin himself in a phrase that a single death is a tragedy, whereas a million deaths is a statistic.[240] It is possible to count the dead as well as the material loss, yet this would be but a reductive approach to the issue. Death is without doubt unquantifiable, as is terror or existential trauma, and any effort to do so would be ill-judged at best and cynically pragmatic at worst.

[239]Gailienė, *Ką Jie Mums Padarė*, 226-227.
[240]Nicholas Eberstadt, "Drunken Nation: Russia's Depopulation Bomb," *World Affairs* 171, no. 4 (2009).

An urge to do so, however, was and is very strong, especially at the time in question.[241] In one of the biggest cultural periodicals of the time, *Literatūra ir menas* [Literature and Art] there was a section called *Atmintis* [The Memory], where topics of repressions, deportations and torture by the regime were being discussed. There, one Lithuanian journalist wrote the following in 1989:

> The unconditional rehabilitation and compensation is but one side of the question. It is crucial to investigate such a massive and cruel crime completely, that is, to precisely establish, how many people were deported, according to nationality, gender, age, profession, how many of them died and why, especially children, whilst being transported and within the exile. It is pure shame that we still do not know the exact terrifying numbers, as if precision is not necessary, when dealing with thousands of tortured people. It is inappropriate to close one's eyes expecting that the crime will turn out to be horrific, shattering, especially because of the humiliation, torture and death as well as non-humanly cruel conditions for thousands of children. It is necessary to establish those guilty of this crime as well as its executors, in spite of the fact that the most important among them are already dead or sentenced to be shot (not because of the deportations, by the way). It is necessary to immediately publish the white (or, to be more precise – the black) book, containing all the documents related to the deportations: the directives, instructions, resolutions, rapports about their execution, the authors of the documents etc. Without this having done, there is no guarantee that similar crimes will not be repeated. Otherwise, all our talks about the nurturing of a just and moral atmosphere, that no crime can be left undiscovered and unpunished, are empty, double-faced and cynical.[242]

Despite the seemingly logical assumptions of the author about the importance to do justice to the victims of the regime, paradoxically an effort to catologise suffering bears its own sinister notes, where retribution for those who are guilty and compensation (material? financial?) for suffering is a prerequisite to establishing moral atmosphere. Tomas Sodeika and Arūnas Sverdiolas have drawn attention to the tendency in the post-Soviet Lithuanian culture to quantify, politicise and matrialise the metaphysial, thus imposing a claim to possess it. Their claim is that the Marxist-materialist thinking, being forced upon the Soviet population, distorts people's world-perception. The authors called it *quasi-metaphysics*, which manifests itself through an inadequate perception of the metaphysical: "It demands to fill one's mind with values and ideals in similar fashion as one fills the shop shelves with groceries. One is supposed to acquire spiritual competence similarly as a piece of machinery is supposed to be constructed better".[243] This theme will be elaborated upon in chapter six.

[241] This tendency is also present among the detached circles of social scientists who need to quantify reality for the sake of method.
[242] Jonas Lelis, "Humanizmas Ir Cinizmas," *Literatūra Ir Menas,* 6/6/1989, 2.
[243] Sodeika and Sverdiolas, *Gyvenimas Kolboje Ir Tuoj Po To*, 494-499.

However, the demand for materialistic retribution for existential and metaphysical harm was one way of confronting the traumatic experience. Gailienė also discusses other ways of healing or overcoming the trauma. According to the author, talking about these traumas is a path to healing and recovery:

> Historical traumas are hard to forget, because they do not allow themselves to be forgotten. The recreation of the terminated identity is a difficult process [...]. We need to name and make peace with all aspects of life, to say that we were humiliated, that we were cowards, that we resisted, that there were those braver than us, that we suffered, that there were those who suffered more than us, that we fought our freedom back, that we have not yet morally and psychologically liberated ourselves from the past.[244]

Yet, as a Lithuanian proverb goes, "each stick has two ends". The escalation of these traumatic issues also continues the reciprocation of the suffering narrative in Lithuania, which is both exalting and self-pitying.[245] It may serve as a way to overcome psychological traumas, yet it also may invoke the feelings of self-righteousness simply due to the virtue of having been victimised. Both of these effects are present in the post-Soviet Lithuanian society and are important for making sense of the post-Soviet Lithuanain identity-related politics. During the *sąjūdis* times, it was this element of self-victimisation that was one of the main motivational forces to oppose the regime. It had at least three effects: it added to the demonised image of the Soviet Union, making the struggle against it more than just political action, but also a personal and existential battle. The USSR became an enemy, much stronger and greater than *sąjūdis*, the battle against which was a matter of life or death.

[244]Gailienė, *Ką Jie Mums Padarė*, 217.

[245]Alvydas Nikžentaitis claims that the emphasis on victimhood in Lithuanian historical narrative leads to various distortions of historical proportionality. See "A.Nikžentaitis: aukos kompleksas apkartina santykius ne tik su Rusija, bet ir su ES [A. Nikžentaitis: The Victim's Complex Embitters Relationships Not Only with Russia, But Also With the EU]", *delfi.lt*,http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/anikzentaitis-aukos-kompleksas-apkartina-santykius-ne-tik-su-rusija-bet-ir-su-es.d?id=26551981#ixzz37YBJRFjt, (Last accessed: July 16, 2014).) A more important argument is put forward by Edward Said, who explores the moral and political power that a victim attains due to its self-victimization. See: Edward Said, *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question* (London and New York: Verso Books, 1988). Árpád Szakólczai, in his critique of egalitarian democratisation discusses the popular contemporary social processes that position victimhood at the centre of the social process, thus turning it into a 'downward spiral', whereby the only way of climbing up socially is through emphasizing own suffering. See: Árpád Szakolczai, "The Non-being of Communism and Myths of Democratisation," in *Democracy and Myth in Russia and in Eastern Europe*, eds. Alexander Wöll and Harald Wydra (London: Routledge, 2008), 45-59.

(Butkutė 2013, 78)

Parallels between the Nazi and the Soviet regimes were drawn by placing both of them into the imaginary sphere of 'totalitarian evil'. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact became a symbolic signifier of this 'evil'. The first public meeting in 1987 took place on the day it was signed, and the day was commemorated in condemnation each year afterwards. The Nazi or Fascist agenda provided emotional power of expression to the symbolism of the Soviet 'evil'.[246]

Secondly, the common narrative, human experience and the surrounding imaginary, as well as the struggle against the common enemy united the people. It moulded the inherent discrepancies within the society, even if only for the period of resistance. It created a common movement, motivated by an urge to break out of the political and existential debility that Soviet society was in. The former Lithuanian Communist Party members and members of *Sąjūdis*, as well as most of the rest of the population acted more or less in a united fashion for a period of time, aiming for the same images such as independence, justice, truth, freedom and better standards of life.

Finally, with the official publication of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the growing realization within the Lithuanian public itself, of the illegality of the Soviet occupation (these facts had been hidden and Lithuania was depicted by the Soviet propaganda as having wilfully joined the Union), a claim of re-establishing the perceived historical justice emerged. History, however, in this instance also had quasi-metaphysical qualities. In a Hegelian fashion (inherent in Communist articulation of historical processes, which

[246] The same imaginary mechanism is actually still functional in Russia's own propaganda in contemporary Ukraine, where the motivation of supporting the Eastern Ukrainian separatists is highly based on representing the Ukrainian military forces as Nazis and fascists. The image of the Soviet 'us' fighting fascist 'them', whether it's Germany, has been prevalent from the WW2, and is evidently still so nowadays. Playing the 'fascist' card in Kremlin's propaganda proved to be so effective that it even convinces wide crowds both in the East and the West. There are indeed clear evidence about the existence of far-right elements both within the Maidan movement and the government that was elected after the ousting of former president Yanukovich in Ukraine. Just like in every case, images and myths do form on the basis of factuality. However the theme is absurdly over-inflated, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

pervaded all spheres of life, including social and political thought), historical processes as well as the historical image of Lithuanian *tauta* now had a (legaly, not theologically articulated) mission, a *telos*.[247] It was to oppose the image of 'evil' in a form of the Soviet Union not only for political reasons, but also for the metaphysical ones, represented by the image of 'good' of independence and Western way of life.

All in all, within the contemporary imaginary, it was the Lithuanian nation that had the existential right, the unity and the aim to strive for independence perceived as an existential, moral and metaphysical ideal rather than the political aim understood in terms of power relations. It became an idealist mission rather than an interest. The element of suffering and victimisation became one of the main sources of motivation for *sąjūdis's* determination. However, there were others, which influenced the formation of the post-Soviet Lithunian identity, the formation and world-perception as well as shaping its politics. A certain moral self-elevation (along with irrational self-denouoncement) and related rhethorics is still present in Lithuanian politics, and the related imaginary is also often used in contemporary populist political campaigns.

4.4 'Betwixt and Between': the post-Soviet passage between East and West

Another experiential factor that is important in the post-Soviet Lithuanian world perception and thus – political identity formation is the liminal experience of transition. There has always been a certain ambiguity related to the situation that modern Lithuania was (and still is) in, as it has historical experience of being both in the *East* and in the *West*. There is therefore no stagnant, unquestionable consistency within the Lithuanian self-perception, which puts it in a situation that could be called *betwixt and between*. Victor Turner, in his famous anthropological work *The Forest of Symbols*, used this title to name the experience of the liminal period of the rite of passage in the small-scale African societies. It marked the condition of the 'passenger', where he has already departed from his prior social (and existential) *self*, and not yet reached the later.[248] The concept is applicable to Lithuania in more than one sense.

As mentioned, Lithuania is stated on the verge between the East and the West in many respects, both locally and temporally.[249] Spatially it is on the Eastern border of the Catholic world and its cultural heritage. Yet the larger part of the historical lands of the GDL was Orthodox, and in rural areas some pagan religious forms remained until the nineteenth

[247]Vilija Aleknaitė, "Tarp in Ir Jan: Žaliuoti Ar Žydėti? ," *Šiaurės Atėnai,* 10/04/1991, 3.
[248]Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, 93-112.
[249] Arguably, the ambiguity is still there, despite the broad and intensive Westernisation processes, as it has been throughout the history.

century (religious/cultural aspect). It is a Baltic land on the verge of Eastern Slavic world. Yet there are Western Slavs from the other side, and the numbers of Balts are rather small (ethnic/linguistic aspect). GDL, whose heritage modern Lithuania bases its historical narrative on, has been an Eastern border of Christian and Muslim world. Yet there were more than six different religions and many more ethnicities present within the duchy, all of which claimed it their home (historical aspect). Lithuania currently is on the Eastern border of the European Union, yet the modern Lithuanian state split from the Russian Empire, and it had been under the Soviet occupation for 50 years (political/economic aspect).

Temporally, therefore, the Lithuanian political, but also – existential situation during the last fifteen years of the twentieth century, can be understood as a kind of rite of passage, from the East to the West (if understood in symbolic terms). This was to be felt at many levels of human existence, as it required a cardinal change in all spheres of life. People had to drop their own habits and learn the new 'rules of the game'. Indeed, parallels between the events in 1987-2000 Lithuania and the rite of passage that Victor Turner talks about can be drawn. Structurally, Turner talks about three phases of the rite of passage: first, the break with the prior identity, second, the liminal, ambiguous period, the *betwixt and between* phase, and finally, the phase of re-aggregation, when the new identity is being taken up, a new quality of being would be entered.[250]

Lithuania in the early nineties: '*betwixt and between*'.
(Top left) Lithuanian border. A volunteer civilian functions as a customs officer, checking the incoming cars. Yet Soviet armoured vehicles are still present at the background. The official sovereignty and independence of the state is reached, but a customs have no professional officers, the power is clearly in the hands of the outsider. The customs function is symbolical; the physical sovereignty is both there and not there. See more in appendix 6.
(Top and bottom right) The title of a former revolution museum is being taken off. The revolution ended without having taken place. The pathos of the revolutionary imaginary deconstructed in a very mundane way. It is now but an empty shell. (Juozas Kazlauskas' personal archive)

[250]Agnese Horvath, "Mythology and the Trickster: Interpreting Communism," in *Democracy and Myth in Russia and Eastern Europe*, eds. Alexander Wöll and Harald Wydra (London: Routledge, 2008), 27-44. 38.

Similarly, the period of 1987 till the declaration of Lithuanian independence on 11 March 1990 could be seen as the first phase of the rite (or, rather, an uncontrolled, spontaneous process) of becoming. The period of March 1990 until approximately August to September 1991, the failed putsch in Moscow can be seen as the purely liminal situation, as the state was *betwixt and between*: neither entirely free nor entirely occupied. And then the period of re-aggregation followed. Lithuania began its path 'Westwards', the end of which could probably be marked by the country's acceptance to NATO and the EU in 2004.

The main difference between the rites of passage that Turner talks about and Lithuania's post-Soviet transition, however, lies within the fact that the rites of passage take place under strict supervision. They are intentional, ritualized and controlled by strict rules. The liminality and the transition that Lithuanians as well as the people from the rest of the post-USSR countries experienced, was more similar to a war, a revolution, a crisis caused by a natural disaster, a tornado or an earthquake.[251] There is no recipe, no ritual for the correct performance of the transition. There are no limits, no rules, clearly delimiting right from wrong – whether legally or in terms of power relations. There is no tradition to lean on, nor any grounding for distinction between the profane and the sacred. Therefore there are plenty of dangers involved in the process, starting with the false imitation of the new existential and political forms, also leading to erratic epistemology and political cosmology (for instance self-sanctification or demonisation of the other), and ending with large-scale acts of violence, as for instance in Serbia and most recently in Ukraine.

The existential questions that the situation posed were intertwined with the political. And there were many ways that Lithuanians reacted to and explained what was happening. The following is a very typical perception of the contemporary Lithuanian situation, written in 1989 and published in 1992:

> The strife for Independence to a Lithuanian is not a romantic pretence, not a xenophobia or egoistic enclosure, but a physical necessity. A Lithuanian is in between the East and the West, and perceives that he doesn't matter to either of them – sadly enough, neither to the West. This resignation, whose roots are deeper, perhaps even metaphysical, is described by an uttering, "*mes vienui vieni* [we are all alone]…" It is a certain kind of individualism, different to a Scandinavian one, which is based on pride. It is cowering, self-inclusion, in search for support there, for internal strength. Its external expression is an instinctive effort for independence, a strife for an independent state.[252]

The self-centred position, defensive introversion was but one reaction to the ambiguous, shifting situation. It resonated within the political context as well, particularly within the

[251]Thomassen, *Uses and Meanings of Liminality*, 5-27
[252]Algirdas Patackas, "Ką Lietuva Gali Duoti Europai?" *Šiaurės Atėnai,* 22/5/1992, 1.

more ‘conservative’ part of the society.[253] There was also another attitude towards the change in life conditions, which expressed itself through efforts to imitate the West, or, to be more precise, the image, a myth of the West, which will be discussed below.

Therefore the process of identity formation, of attaining the new political ‘self’ took place in a context of the liminal experience of transition. The changes were either met with introverted reservation, or embraced, with efforts to imitate the ideal. Either way, two things emerge from this. First, that the process of post-Soviet Lithuanain identity formation took place within the binary tension between (the images of) the East and the West. Secondly, in the Lithuanain case the teleology of transformation was clear and it pointed towards the West. It is therefore important to understand the reasons for such teleology, and that requires a closer look into the two images in question.

The binary imaginary of West and East as ‘good’ and ‘evil’

The third experiential theme that is important in understanding the post-Soviet Lithuanian transition is the notion that this was not only a struggle between political, but also – metaphysical powers. Political images and action were infused with ontological values. Lithuania is not the only post-Soviet country that embraced the rhetoric of ‘returning to the West’. The idea was very influential among other post-Soviet, and especially, post-Warsaw Pact European states. The expression, however, bears many more meanings to those ‘returning’ than a mere shift in political circumstances or economic system. One of the leading figures of *Sąjūdis*, Romualdas Ozolas exclaimed a few months before regaining the independence:

> So should we return to what we were running from? I think – yes! There is no other way than back. If we want to save ourselves, if we want to live at all (that counts not only for us!) – let’s get back as soon as possible to what we were persistently denying for so long: back to private property, competition, monetary relations, democracy, decency, faith.[254]

Next to private property, democracy and competition, concepts of decency and faith are presented as integral parts of the image of the ‘Western’ way of life. The strife for the

[253]The word conservative is put in inverted commas because it is difficult to unconditionally talk about the contemporary Lithuanian society in terms of it being conservative (or liberal).It was first of all post-Socialist. Conservative thought and attitude to life is based on ideals of slow change, moderation, limits and tradition. However, firstly, the post-Soviet period was essentially opposite to all of these things. Secondly, unlike in Poland, Hungary or Bulgaria, in Lithuanian case, there was no real, lived, physical continuation between the interwar Lithuania and the post-Soviet one (or its idea). The continuity was only legal, as Lithuania was occupied illegally and never recognized otherwise, as well as imaginary, surviving through the historical narrative. There were many people who had experienced both the pre-Soviet and the post-Soviet Lithuania, yet the temporal distance between the two was so vast that it is impossible to talk about an actual, live modern Lithuanian political tradition.

[254]Romualdas Ozolas, "Kokia Yra Ir Kokia Turėtų Būti Komunistų Partija," *Literatūra Ir Menas,* 4/11/1989, 3.

image of the West, therefore, also implied a quest for certain metaphysical values which were lacking at the existential present. Both images of East (the USSR) and West were value-laden and symbolic. It is therefore very important to note these values. First of all, it explains the determination and the lack of compromise within the Lithuanian strife for independence, which was often a matter of concern and surprise, even to the Western world.[255] Secondly, it can also explain the motivation behind Lithuania's interest in joining the Western international organisations as well as pursuing pro-Western politics, which were sometimes at odds with the state's economic and pragmatic interest (which will be discussed in more detail in the next section).

The West

The contemporary representations of the West in the Lithuanian society reveal that the image of the West was perceived in an absolutely positive light not only because of the quality of the goods that were sometimes smuggled into Lithuania and the news (as well as music) that were caught on the radio, but also because it represented everything that the Soviet Union was not. The West was imagined as democratic, liberal and Christian. It was an imaginary space of freedom, choice, high living standards, high-quality products, a land of plenty: heaven on Earth, a sphere of ontological 'good'. It was also important that even the qualities themselves, which represented the West, were perceived not only in political and economic terms, but in quasi-religious fashion:

"Without free Baltics, there is no free Europe" (Juozas Kazlausas' personal archive)

> Liberalism is not only the higher, but the highest level of social justice. Nowadays it determines international relations, UN activity, human rights and the progress of the civilization. The essence of liberalism is simple: maximum personal freedom for a human being with a maximum social responsibility. If a state accepts liberalism, it inevitably opens up for international relations, technical progress, universalism and social justice.

[255] It is no secret that the West was looking forward to the changes brought about by Gorbachev's turn in politics. Hardly anyone anticipated such a swift fall of the Union, as a slow and gradual change within the political system was more broadly anticipated. Therefore Lithuania's urge to push for its complete independence as soon as possible, at least in the US, was met both with encouragement and reservation. Lithuania was playing a risky game, and chances were that either Gorbachev or some other political force within the Union would take up strict and cruel politics that they were capable of, in effort to revert the processes of transformation that were taking place Union-wide. (*Mekas, Lithuania and the Collapse of the USSR*)

> All of these are the followings of the Christian world perception […]. On the other hand it does not hold Christianity absolute; it does not elevate it (even if it is well deserved) above other world-perceptions and cultures… In this sense, liberalism is a meta-ideology, the highest degree of unity. It could only have been achieved by the Western civilization.[256]

The idealised image of the West and its liberal ways was counterpoised to the conditions under the Soviet regime. Indeed, the difference was immense. However it was the case not only in terms of freedom, social and political engagement and standards of life, but also in terms of both historical agenda and the cultural taboos. The following quote is from an underground dissident Lithuanian cultural journal *Sietynas*. One of the most highly regarded contemporary Lithuanian poets, a humanist and intellectual, tells his impressions after his trip to Western Berlin in 1990:

> One month in Western Berlin was enough to spend in order for me to understand that even a negro, who has not that long ago lingered here from the inaccessible African jungle, is more free than me, a man from the socialist paradise… How was it possible for me to approach that negro and boast that I am a descendant of one of the oldest European nations [*tauta*], and that my language is the closest to Sanskrit that there is? He could not be less concerned with all this. He lives in a free city; he buys oranges and bananas from the very morning, whenever he desires; he drinks German beer and French wine, he studies cultural studies along with Japanese and Chinese students.[257]

This fascinating quote requires at least a couple of comments, in order for it not to be misperceived, as it reveals various levels of the contemporary Lithuanian imaginary and existential condition, as well as (especially cultural) identity in the early 1990s. Probably the most striking aspect to a Western reader that needs explaining is the racist tone of the speaker. It is important here to see the pervasive imaginary in the text and understand the archetypical attitude of the viewer. The imaginary "negro" as well as the "Chinese" and the "Japanese" are perceived as natural foreigners to the "Christian, free and liberal" West. The beer is archetypically German, the wine is French, the "negro" buys oranges and bananas, because that is what grows in the imaginary "inaccessible jungles of Africa".

It is clear, as it is also factually true that at that time, the speaker had vague if any conception of the scale, the importance and the effect of twentieth-century emancipation movements across Europe. The quote demonstrates the scale of difference in the world perceptions between the post-Soviet and Western worlds.[258] The information about the

[256]Arvydas Juozaitis, "Teisingos Visuomenės Samprata," *Šiaurės Atėnai,* 21/2/1990, 3.
[257]Sigitas Geda, *Sietynas*, 1990, 19.
[258] The image that this, as well as the author of the previous quote had at the time, though, also have other important aspects. Firstly they are ignorant of the Western imaginary relating to racism, as there were no ways of knowing the social and political dramas of the 20th century behind the Iron Curtain. Secondly, the image is infused with historical Darwinism of Marxist propaganda about the development of the "Modern World" and the primitivism of "the negros". Thirdly, however, the imaginary "negro", who is perceived as

West was extremely scarce in the Soviet Union, which allowed for the imagination to fill the gaps of ignorance. The important thing to realize here is that many things that were held by the West as a common sense for decades were absolutely new to the "man from the socialist paradise". This can refer not only to the post-sixties changes in race related attitudes, but also things like the democratic political tradition, liberal ethics, etc.[259]

All these new things Lithuanians (as well as other Easterners) had to learn. And they learned them firstly through imitating the Western political and social forms. A philosopher Krescencijus Stoškus, observed this in 1990's Lithuanian press:

> "Most of our periodic press only flirts with the West: they catch their symbols, mass images, random props, advertisement façade and a bunch of fashionable superficialities. You can see how badly they want to be Western and how badly it turns out: a spirit of purely Soviet upbringing constantly emerges past the Western covering. It can't be different in a place where a simple sense of dignity does not evoke a wish to grow, but merely a wish to look respectable. You cannot fabricate culture historically. You can only fabricate its lucid covering."[260]

As it therefore can be observed, a new identity mask of practice and representation, imitating the looks of the Western world has been forming. It would be unfair to say that the Western influence was seen in an entirely positive light. It has also been criticized. The inauthenticity of the new forms of life was obvious, as was their misconception. Probably the main inadequacy laid in a kind of sanctification of the political. The Western ways of life, the Western 'good' was so desired and idealized that it eventually gained quasi-religious attributes, which I will talk about below. Vytautas Kavolis, Lithuanian liberal thinker, whose family emigrated to the USA during the second Soviet occupation, gave a clear description of the contemporary political situation:

> All of the Baltic States are exceptional among some other Soviet Union and Eastern European regions, in their self-collected and humble ways of striving their political interests of national independence… At least in Lithuania, this reservedness of political action does not have much to do with a general culture of liberalism. Liberalism is currently lively discussed, and has gained a type of fabricated

somehow lesser, is yet seen by the author as more free than the "man from the socialist paradise", putting *himself* even below the former. The account therefore may be derogatory epistemologically, but it is not so intentionally – quite on the opposite. The fact that this was written by an exceptionally bright and incisive humanist thinker, however, illustrates the importance and profoundness of the role of the said imaginary in human world perception. However, paradoxically, should he have actually expressed these thoughts in this kind of imaginary in the "free West", legal charges would be possibly cast upon him, based on the imaginary, emanating from the Western anxieties, related to colonialist and national-socialist historical agenda. The last aspect, which I want to draw attention to, is the way that the author refers to himself. He is a "man from the (ironically expressed) socialist paradise", but he also belongs to a nationality with a very long history, unique culture and archaic language – modern Lithuanian identity-related imaginary that I have discussed earlier.

[259] This can explain the clash of cosmologies in 2014, which will be discussed in the following chapters, when the Ukrainian crisis unveiled the vast gaps in world perception and value systems, not just a geopolitical division between the West, Ukraine, several other post-Soviet countries and Russia.

[260] Stoškus, *Per "Proskyną" Į Europą*, 5

> attractiveness as an opposition to totalitarianism; yet liberalism is broadly discussed in the spirit of the 19th century and is under attack by the coalition of Catholics and *tautininkai* as being "cosmopolitan" or slightly communist and amoral. The main premise of liberalism that the society starts with an individual and that it has to respect his (her) choice, is in collision with an attitude, which is clearly dominant in the second rebirth of Lithuania, that individuals start as members of a *tauta* and that its leaders are inseparable from the nation, as the Lithuanian Democratic Party has recently declared when talking about Vytautas Landsbergis.[261]

In this quote we can see both the inadequate elevation either of the Western political forms or of the national self – two tendencies in the contemporary Lithuanian intellectual life and political imaginary that also constituted the intellectual division in the Lithuanian society between different intellectual positions. Secondly, as Kavolis states, the popularity was caused due to their counter-position to the Soviet, communist sphere of 'evil'. The image of the West, and the US in particular, consisted of everything that the Soviet existence was lacking. It therefore has been forming as the opposite image to that of existence now and here. Lithuanian political identity was therefore teleologically bound to transcend the contemporary existence and attain the utopia of freedom, independence, wellbeing and security.

Prof. Vytautas Landsbergis, the leader of *Sąjūdis* and the contemporary High Council of Lithuania, walking in between the sandbags prepared for the possible assault by the Soviet army (during the 'January events'). In the background, a picture of the Liberty Statue can be seen. This iconography represents an existential claim, because the statue here represents the Western 'good', whereas in case of the Soviet attack, it was this picture, under which the defenders would fight back, and, most likely, die. (Juozas Kazlauskas' personal archive)

The East

The East, on the other hand, was an even more important image in the contemporary Lithuanian political cosmology. It was naturally firstly associated with the USSR – a

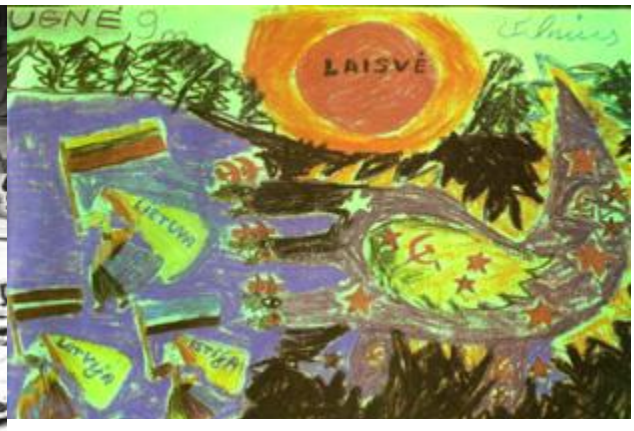
[261]Vytautas Kavolis, "Antrasis Lietuvos Atgimimas: Kultūra Kaip Veikla," *Sietynas*, 1991, .

regime that was occupational and in the popular Lithuanian consciousness, brought nothing more but suffering and destruction. However, it represented and still represents more than a historical, factual political entity of the Soviet Union. It represents the image of eastern "Empire", a powerful, expansive and brute force, much stronger than Lithuania, which has continuously been threatening the lands and nations surrounding it. This image is articulated rationally, in the intellectual context as well. Bronius Genzelis talks about this broader concept of the Russian "Empire":

> The Empire changed its name more than once: it was called simply Russian Empire until 1917, until 1922 it was called Russian Federation, and from 1922 it was Soviet Union. Its internal political dispositions, ideology (from Orthodox Christianity to atheist bolshevism – either way, unconditional faith was demanded), yet it was always seeking to spread its territory and executed politics of russification (trying to rusify some inhabitants of occupied lands and physically destroy the others).
>
> […] In the intersection of 19th and 20th century, two ideologies met in Russia: the ancient Slavophilia […] and Communism, based on ideas of equality of all nations and peoples […]. The idea of equality appealed to some of the non-Russians as well. Therefore not everyone understood that Communism was adding to the expansion of the Russian Empire.[262]

The image of "the East" at the times of *sąjūdis* also incorporated notions of 'Asiatic despotism', cultural oppression, russification (note the importance of language to a Lithuanian cultural identity) and militant atheism. The Soviet regime, 'the East', was seen as a source of lies, oppression and amorality. It was anti-human, corrupt, ungodly, violent i.e. evil in its barest sense.[263] Algirdas Patackas – one of the more radical, leading Lithuanian cultural figures of the time – expressed this very directly as well as described his vision of the role that the newly-formed Lithuanian state should take:

[262]Bronius Genzelis, *Tautinės Savimonės Išlikimas Ir Brendimas Lietuvos Okupacijos Sąlygomis* [The Survival and Development of National Consciousness Under the Conditions of Lithuanian Occupation] (Vilnius: Center of Lithuanian Genocide and Resistance Research, 2012), 15-16.
[263] Similar image of Ukraine is being constantly depicted by contemporary Russian television.



Different iconographic representations of the Soviet 'evil' in contemporary drawings. The ones on the left had been hung outside the Parliament after the January events. The one above represents The Baltic states running from a Soviet dragon. The word "*laisvė*" written on the sun means "freedom". (Juozas Kazlauskas' personal archive; (Mickevičius and Nekrošius 1991,36)

> Everything that in any way has to do with violence, balances on the verge of "satanity". The KGB is its radical expression, the level of the Antichrist. And violence is essentially dangerous. […] All a man can do is to try to desatanise that institution. […] Lithuania could become such a country – it is the only country in Europe that could carry the burden of such a spiritual experiment.[264]

The ideas above may seem rather drastic and inflated, yet it is this kind of attitude towards the Soviet Union that seems to have motivated a large portion of the people for actively resisting both the Soviet aggression and Gorbachev's sweet talks. That is a mythological perception of the political *par excellence*, and as the pictures above demonstrate, it was quite common within the contemporary Lithuanian society. It is especially well expressed in numerous political drawings which would be hung in public places in Vilnius. The Soviet Union here is depicted in various different forms of 'evil': as a military boot, a spider, a dragon, a grim reaper, bloodthirsty Gorbachev or other mythological creatures. The factual reality was, naturally, different. There were many people in Russia itself, who

A massive demonstration in Moscow, supporting Lithuania. The sign on the left says in Russian: "Wake up, Russia! Let the tiny proud Lithuania be an example for you!" (Miknevičiūtė 2005, 24-25)

[264] Aleknaitė, *Tarp in Ir Jan: Žaliuoti Ar Žydėti?* , 3

supported the Lithuanian strife for the independence. Yet this was not evident to Lithuanians at the time, and thus the imaginary was more important than the factuality.

The formation of the two images discussed above, that of the Western 'good' and Eastern 'evil' created a binary teleological axis to the Lithuanians under the mentioned liminal conditions of uncertainty and disarray. This kind of semi-religious imaginary of the political situation provided the ontological explaination for the crisis that was taking place and the motivation for the strife for independence, which would otherwise be seen as irrational, too dangerous or impossible. Lithuanians were striving for the 'good' against the 'evil', perceiving it as an existential act, not only a political struggle. And it was this context, in which the new Lithuanian mask identity and its new political cosmology was gradually forming. We will now observe how this new cosmology started to emerge, and how it became codified, embedded in the new Lithuanian society.

4.5 Political religiousness and the authentification of identity mask

Up till this point, various factors that conditioned the shape and character of the Lithuanian independence movement have been discussed. Firstly various social, political and economic reasons for the emergence of *sąjūdis* were considered. Then the dissertation looked at the human experiential aspect of the process and demonstrated that there were several predominant experiential themes that pervaded the movement and provided it with various moral motivations. Afterwards, it was shown how due to particular liminal conditions and the aforementioned rational and experiential reasons, the struggle for independence turned from a political one into an existential one. It assumed quasi-metaphysical character when the images of the East and the West became associated with the categories of 'good' and 'evil'.

The question that needs to be tackled now is as follows: what is the importance of these factors for the post-Soviet Lithuanian political identity formation and how did it shape its character? In order to answer this question, we need to discuss the last aspect of post-Soviet Lithuania's political and existential becoming – the role of political religiousness and sacristy, without which it is impossible to grasp neither the significance nor the gravity of the entire process. After establishing that, it will be easier to understand why seemingly the non-factual, socially and intellectually constructed images that constitute political identity mask become such an authentic, existentially important component of people's political self that they are ready to risk their lives and to protect it.

Religiousness in the contemporary politics expressed itself in direct and indirect ways. There were religious actors working in the opposition to the regime, namely – the pagan and Catholic activists – both secular and ecclesiastic. Another area, however, was the political imaginary, evident through the contemporary press, where religiousness merged with the political, spatial and temporal, rendering the struggle for independence a sacred quest.

Direct religiousness: pagan and Christian

As mentioned earlier, especially during the periods of occupation, religion played not only a spiritual but also a political role of fostering and preserving Lithuanian identity.[265] In terms of historical imaginary, Lithuanian paganism and Catholicism are the most influential forms of faith. In the Soviet Union, Catholicism became a form of dissident resistance, while pagan, ethnographic mythological, folkloristic studies and activities maintained a type of Lithuanian identity, managed to balance on the verge of legitimacy and have not been banned. According to Viktorija Daujotytė (born in 1945), the largely ethnic, agrarian culture was a natural, habitual part of life – especially for her generation who had been brought up in countryside:

> In the times of my youth there was more faith and less doubt, and nowadays there is more doubt and less faith. I think, this has to do with a fact that I am a countryside child. Even though my childhood passed during the dark post-war period, the surroundings of the ethnic culture to me have always been *a priori*. I simply fell right into it, I walked into it. And until I was 14, I had no other alternatives. I did not imagine that there is a different way of life. It seemed to me that to live like your grandparents did, very closely following the customs of agrarian culture, is natural and habitual. I remember how my granny would cross the animals when she was letting them out into fields. Even though it is a Christian sign, but actually its deeper motivation is very old, related to the brotherhood and unity between man and the lived world... Therefore this absence of alternatives, easily confirms the foundations of a little human being: things are the way you live, how your loved people live, because everything that they do seems appropriate, and you therefore have a wish to act the way they do.[266]

Especially after the end of the Soviet Union, this ethnographic, folklorist intellectual and experiential interest inspired an emergence of a neo-pagan movement. However, it should not be put into one basket with the late modern 'new age' movements in the West. The studies of pre-historical Lithuanian heritage began in the fifteenth century, when the pagan cultures (firstly Greek and Roman, but also Baltic), shunned in medieval times, began attracting interest and attention in the Renaissance epoch. This was fortunate in the case of

[265] Ališauskas, *Krikščionybės Lietuvoje Istorija*, 495-500.
[266] "V. Daujotytė apie etninę kultūrą sovietmečiu [V. Daujotytė on Ethnic Culture in Soviet Times]", *Sovietika. Sovietinės okupacijos studijos 1944-1990*,http://www.sovietika.lt/348447/straipsniai/atmintis/v.daujotyte-apie-etnine-kultura-sovietmeciu, (Last accessed: November 6, 2013).

Lithuania, as Lithuania's pre-Christian culture (though degenerated) was still partially alive and practiced in the rural areas, and was accessible directly.[267]

Some forms of pagan beliefs, detached from the organic belief system, but remaining adequate in the unchanging agrarian lived context, maintained, in forms of rituals, celebrations or superstitions without systematic meanings in some Lithuanian rural areas throughout the modern age, until the earlytwentieth century. In the nineteenth century, though, the interest in and research on the Lithuanian pre-Christian past intensified and provided cultural inspiration for the romantic-influenced formation of a modern, ethnically-articulated, national and later political identity, as well as an influential secular patriotic movement of *Tautininkai*. In the last couple of decades of the twentieth century, however, a certain neo-pagan revival can be observed.

This was also one of the moving powers for "*Sąjūdis*".[268] Even though its coherence and actual practicality could be criticized, it poses a certain cultural influence to some post-Soviet Lithuanians, especially the younger generation, as well as provides inspirational grounds for the formation of a post-Soviet national narrative. Therefore the pagan, folkloristic 'spirituality', first of all, as an image of an authentic Lithuanian cultural *persona*, became an important element in Lithuanian political identity. It also in many ways re-actualised the traditional Lithuanian naturalist *tauta* ethics, revitalising and enacting a live, experienced human connection to nature. Through this medium, it established a link with the *tauta* tradition, which provided both inspiration and existential foundation of natural authenticity for resisting the technocratic absurdity of the Soviet regime.

Another, perhaps even more important theme in this context, is the role of Christianity, and in particular – that of Catholicism. Here Catholicism does not only mean a religion. In the contemporary contex, it also symbolised and conveyed Western European cultural values. As quoted above, one of the leaders of *Sąjūdis* labeled liberalism as the most Christian form of government.[269] One has to bear in mind, though, that at that time Lithuanians had no actual experience of liberal life, and it seemed good if only due to the fact that it was seen as the opposite of Communism.

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[267]Norbertas Vėlius, *Lietuvių Mitologija* [Lithuanian Mythology], Vol. 1 (Vilnius: Mintis, 1995).

[268] During the last two decades of Soviet occupation, slogans of Lithuanians being the last pagans in Europe (which is historically almost true) became popular. This provided a possibility for people to distance themselves in a politically acceptable way (since it did not promote the dissident Catholicism) from the Soviet identity, and socialist clichés of multiple "*narody*" (see appendix 2), and promoted the individuality, particularity of Lithuanian identity. (Arūnas Streikus, "Ateistinės propagandos pobūdis Lietuvoje 1975–1988 m [The Character of Atheist Propaganda in Lithuania 1975-1988]," *genocid.lt*,http://genocid.lt/Leidyba/13/streikus.htm, (Last accessed: 21/04/2015).)

[269]Juozaitis, *Teisingos Visuomenės Samprata*, 3

The political underpinning of the Catholic aspect in Lithuanian identity narrative is even broader. Historically, in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, the Catholic Church was one of the most profound bastions for spreading and sustaining the modern Lithuanian identity, most of all linguistic but also political.[270] In the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church and also Catholic thought was one of the main bulwarks against the Tsarist cultural assimilation policy in Lithuania.

One of the independence movement meetings in Vilnius. The banner says "Europe, show Christian solidarity to the suffering Baltic people!" (Juozas Kazlauskas's personal archive)

Later this helped to generate a few generations of modern Lithuanian *intelligentsia* in the late nineteenth and earlytwentieth century, and influencing one of the main strands of political thought during the interwar period.[271] In the Soviet times, it was heavily repressed but managed to inspire political dissidents, as well as the production and sustaining of Lithuanian identity narrative in the Lithuanian diaspora in the United States, and was one of the main actors in the movement for Lithuanian independence in the late 1980s.[272] In fact, many new-born Lithuanian children at the time, including myself, were baptised not only with an intention to introduce them into the Catholic community, but also into the "true" Lithuanian community.[273] It was also done as a form of resistance to the strictly atheist Soviet regime, even though the parents were not necessarily believers.

Indirect religiousness: political, temporal and spatial

The above-mentioned political character of religion is of main interest to this research at the present juncture. The existential dimension of the independence movement and the

[270]Ališauskas, *Krikščionybės Lietuvoje Istorija*, 375-382.
[271]Dementavičius et al., *Lietuvos Politinės Minties Antologija, I Tomas. Lietuvos Politinė Mintis 1918 – 1940 M.*, 16.
[272]Kavaliauskaitė and Ramonaitė, *Sąjūdžio Ištakų Beieškant: Nepaklusniųjų Tinklaveikos Galia*, 37-41.
[273] Baptism was illegal and dangerous in the USSR. Parents, who would baptize their children, if they held leading or public posts, could lose them, which would mean that they would not be admitted to any other position. One has to bear in mind that at that time, no one realistically believed in the end of the USSR, which came about as a surprise to the Soviet population.

eschatological struggle against the Soviet 'evil' rendered this political process also a quasi-religious one. This quasi-religiousness manifested in various political forms.[274]Algirdas Patackas exclaimed in 1989: "This crisis can be perceived in various ways – economically, politically, etc. Yet perhaps the most universal way to understand the Russian form of Communism is as a pseudo-religion, as a yet another pseudo-Christian heresy of unseen scale – the one prophesized in Dostoyevsky's "Devils"".[275]

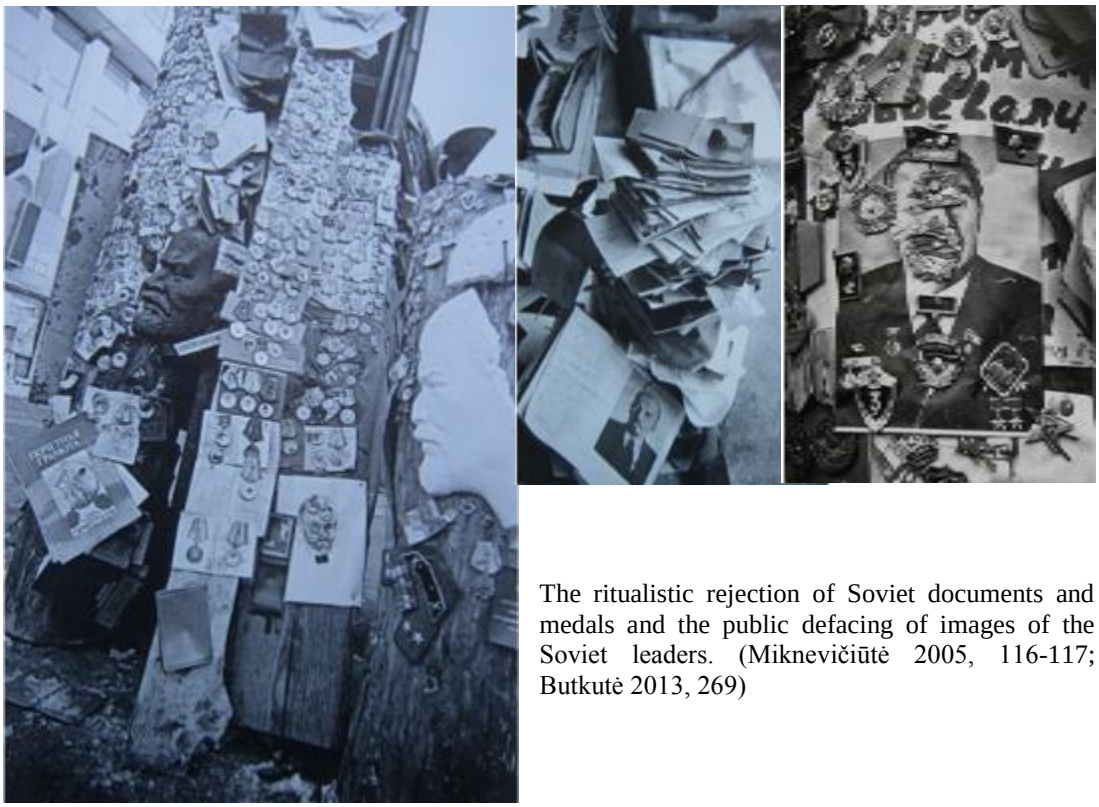
Seeing the regime as a religion and even more – a herecy, or positioning the political at the realm of religion and metaphysics rendered various other religion-related actions sensible as well. Some articles in the contemporary cultural press called for forgiveness to collaborators as a necessary means for a free, integral further life.[276] In a Christian practice, the society needed to refresh, restart, confess and repent, start anew. An interview with Romualdas Granauskas provides his confession and repentence for collaborating with the regime.[277] Collaboration here is perceived as a religious sin. Religious terms are being used in the article, which ends with an invitation for others to repent. Articles and discussions of similar kind were plenty in the contemporary press. Other manifestations of political religiousness were present in various processions and political rituals that were particularly popular at the time.

[274]See appendix 8.
[275]Patackas, *Ką Lietuva Gali Duoti Europai?*, 1.
[276]"Amnestija." *Šiaurės Atėnai,* 21/3/1990, a, 2.
[277]"Vasario 16-Ąją Su Šunim Ir Saugumo Agentu." *Šiaurės Atėnai,* 21/3/1990, b, 3.

(Top left) Former Lenin's Square in Soviet times. The statue is pointing at the KGB headquarters opposite to it.
(Top left and bottom) Lenin's statue taken down.
(Šeškus 2012; Juozas Kazlauskas personal archive)
See also Appendix 1.

The struggle for independence therefore no longer was a merely political, but also an existential and quasi-religious act. Even if the rhetoric surrounding this image, in a popular fashion, gained a bombastic note, the suffering was real and can still be felt nowadays. Since 1991, there have been ongoing debates about the future of the former Lenin's square in Vilnius in front of the KGB headquarters. The space brings many terrible memories to the older generations of Lithuanians.

In 1990, Lenin's statue was overthrown amid great cheers. The ritualistic denouncement of various Soviet imaginary was particularly widespread during the period in other cases as well. Even nowadays there are ongoing debates about whether or not to remove the four statues from the Soviet era, representing various proletarian and military professions, which still stand on one of the bridges in Vilnius.



The ritualistic rejection of Soviet documents and medals and the public defacing of images of the Soviet leaders. (Miknevičiūtė 2005, 116-117; Butkutė 2013, 269)

Religious iconography was also used as an integral part of the official politics of the young Lithuanian Republic. One of the images representing Lithuanian "character" that emerged in the Interwar Lithuania was that of *Rūpintojėlis*, the *Ecce Homo*, the *Schmerzesmann*, the Worried Man. In a traditional medieval iconography it symbolised a meditative, personalist character, an individual prayer and a mode of survival, of bearing the situation.[278] In 1937 it was chosen as a symbol of Lithuania in EXPO fair in Paris. The image was once again re-enacted during the struggle for the independence in late 1980s.[279] The martyro-logical image of Lithuanian identity became particularly important in asserting the moral right to independence. The image of suffering *tauta* sanctified the cause.

[278]Gabija Surdokaitė, "Rūpintojėlis Lietuvių Tautosakoje Ir Liaudies Skulptūroje: Pagrindiniai Sampratos Aspektai," *Tautosakos Darbai* XL (2010), 139-159.

[279] Roughly every third generation of Lithuanians would be "bled down". Violent events would take place every 30-40 years: the partition of 1794, uprisings in 1831 and 1862-1863 and 1905, the battles with Polish, German and Russian armies after the World Wwar one, World War Two, the guerilla resistance against the Bolsheviks as well as the ongoing deportations, torture and repressions throughout the period of Soviet occupation.

Vytautas Landsbergis, the leader of Lithuanian Republic High Council and Bronislovas Kuzmickas, the assistant leader of Lithuanian Republic High Council meet Robert Nixon (December, 1990). A figurine of *Rūpintojėlis* is standing in the background. (Žemaitytė 2010).

Sacrification of the new identity mask: the "January events"

Having discussed the various forms of quasi-religious behaviour and the importance of religiousness and symbolical, metaphysical thinking to *sąjūdis*, we now may ask what this means for identity formation. In May 1990, a famous Lithuanian literary author wrote when describing one of the contemporary intellectual's gatherings: "Yet the main motif in the congress was the word CRISIS, which was sometimes softened and called CROSSROAD – between finitude and renewal, between insanity and healthy mind, between captivity and freedom, between disbelief and faith; it needs CHRISTENING […]".[280] This Christening may be interpreted in many ways. To Lithuanians it firstly meant inner liberation, inner transformation from *homo sovieticus* into a genuine, free human being, a political 'self'.[281]

However physically it came about in the form of blood sacrifice. In January 1991, almost a year after the declaration of Lithuanian independence, the collapsing Soviet regime gave its last push in order to resume control over Lithuania. Soviet army was still present in the country at the time, and early in the month it started moving towards various strategic objects, forcefully overtaking them. The news spread across Lithuania, and people started gathering around various objects, most significant of which was the TV tower and Seimas (Lithuanian houses of parliament). Because there were so many people gathering, and due to the international pressure, the ultimate bloodbath did not take place, yet 14 perished

[280] Jurga Ivanauskaitė, "Ar Turėsime Drąsos Būti Lietuviai?" *Šiaurės Atėnai,* 30/5/1990, 1.
[281] A similar motivation was at the core of Maidan in Ukraine as well.

under soviet tanks that night, as a peaceful crowd were simply standing and singing (formerly forbidden) national songs, not letting the soviets past.[282]

There are three important elements in this story. First of all, the resistence was and remained peaceful despite the deadly aggression directed towards them. As mentioned before, *sąjūdis* was deeply inspired by Ghandi's political example. For this reason, it deserves being seen as absolutely morally superior to the oppressor – a fact that was indeed realized and sometimes used as means of establishing own political agenda in later times. The entire movement was also led by the best in the society – cultural, intellectual and, as it turned out in practice, moral elite at the time, as opposed to the richest, most powerful, most brutal, most convincing or most pragmatic. The second element is that the "January events" were perceived in existential, eschatological terms. This is both a result of and a cause for the quasi-religious aspect mentioned above. On the one hand, it was not only political, economic and cultural freedom that was defended here, but also one's own profound existence that was sublimated, conceptualized in the image of independent Lithuania. On the other hand, speaking in these terms, it was exactly the Christening, the successful rite of passage for Lithuanians, whose *tauta* was now a true, existent political *persona* that peacefully resisted the Soviet tanks.

And this leads us to the third, conceptual element of the story. The "January events" demonstrate the point that was made in Chapter three. *Sąjūdis* was born as a fiction, as a dream, which entailed various moral and political images of freedom, victimhood, East and West, of 'self' and the 'other', as well as various historical images that inspired the content of the 'self' – those of ancestors, great dukes, pagan gods, ancient heritage, of *Žalgiris* battle, ancient language, naturalist ethics, Christian affinity to the West and of *tauta* as a real, functioning, ontological actor. It created a particular political cosmology, the *Lebenswelt* for those participating, and in doing so, it created the authentic political identity: those who participated, those embedded, actualized their own existence using a partially imaginary, partially artificial and partially factual identity mask. This is how, through human experience, through political practice and participation in the hard, real, "objective" political events, identity mask becomes an authentic, existential part of the actor. On its turn, as it is once again reflected upon, looked at critically, presented with an alternative, also being subjected to new political events, it once again starts the production of new identity masks.

[282] See appendix 7.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter sought to exemplify and illustrate the most important element of the theory that this dissertation is building. By looking at lived human experience of those participating in the political process, it demonstrated firstly how in the political process various historical, political and other images form a particular cosmology, secondly, how this cosmology influences political action and finally how in this interaction, through political practice, political identity is being formed.

The chapter discussed various factors that comprised and started *sąjūdis*: the political situation Union-wide, the economical downfall, the social changes as well as various cultural initiatives. It then looked at the human experience of this process and distincted four main epochal experiential themes that provided the movement with human content: the sense of victimhood, the experience of liminal transition, of being in between, associative images of the *East* and the *West*, and the consequential sacrification of the political cause.

By sacrification I meant the introduction of the existential in the political, of ontological in the mythological. The chapter discussed how these quasi-religious images begin to function in real politics and how it provides political action with such motivation that would not be possible through economic or other "interest" that rationalist theories imply. It is at this moment, when through political practice the mythological is merged with the political cosmology, that the identity mask becomes an ontological, lived and experienced political *persona*. The post-Soviet Lithuanian *tauta* was born when its cultural image and all that it entailed, was defended during the January events (among other smaller symbolical battles by *sąjūdis*). This was the rebirth of the authentic Lithuanian political self, which functions internationally and gives answers as well as poses new questions in relation to the post-Soviet human question "who am I?".

Chapter 5. Identity formation outside Lithuania

5.1 Introduction

The previous three chapters of this dissertation established the core theoretical approach to this study of political identity formation in the post-USSR region. The focus on the Lithuanian case served as an illustration for the theoretical framework that the dissertation seeks to develop. It was argued that political identity formation is best understood in existential terms, as the becoming of political 'self' or *persona* and thatit consists of three continuously interacting parts: first, historical and political factuality; second, intellectual and constructed political cosmology; third, experiential phenomenology. I argued that through the wider process that involves these three elements new mask-identities emerge. And through participation in the political they become an authentic part of existence in the polity by shaping political rhetoric and practice.

However, there are still several questions that arise with regards to this approach. First of all, can the theory be applied beyond the Lithuanian case? Do these or similar political, cultural and existential processes take place in other post-Soviet countries as well? Second, if so, why is there a variation in the outcome of these processes? What other factors influence political identity formation? Third, Lithuania is a relatively homogeneous case, both ethnically and historical narrative-wise. What happens to political identity where there is no such predominant homogeneity and where several narratives clash?

This chapter will attempt to address these questions while at the same time developing some of the theoretical themes discussed previously. In the first instance I will further explore the condition of liminality and how it encourages the formation of new political identities and images. Three different modalities of the liminal condition will be discussed: the temporal, the formal and the spatial. Moreover, the chapter will examine three historical and political images of three different personalities from three different post-Soviet states in order to highlight the meaning and political role that these images play in those countries. Finally, I will refer to the contemporary issues unfolding in the region, namely the Ukrainian crisis. I will discuss what will be called a clash of narratives between three participating sides: the West (by which I mean the EU and the USA), Russia and Ukraine. Two core images of 'being right-wing' and of 'being the West' will be analysed from these three perspectives in the context of Ukraine's 'Euromaidan'. The final section will draw some conclusions.

5.2 Political identity and modalities of liminal experience

Building on the discussion of the liminal existential condition in previous chapters, this section explores various contexts of the post-Soviet European political sphere in which liminality is key. I will distinguish three perspectives from which the problem will be approached in relation to the topic of political identity. First of all, I will examine the temporal dimension of liminality in case of Ukraine, demonstrating how the spirit of Soviet existence can linger over an extended period of time, even after the factual collapse of the USSR. Secondly, I will focus on the formal liminality in case of Russia, arguing that the 'in-between-ness' here manifests in its historical narrative. The contradiction in self-perception traps it between different historical narrtaives and identities of Imperial, Soviet and federal/democratic Russia. Thirdly, I will analyse the spatial dimension of liminality, where either formerly uniform spaces, in form of states split, or previously separate spaces unite, generating the ex-static experiences within the society.

Temporal liminality: Post-Soviet political identity in Ukraine

The previous chapters showed that the process of political identity formation can be divided into three elements: the political, the intellectual and the experiential. Politically, the post-Soviet epoch started after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. New, post-Soviet states appeared (such as Ukraine and Belarus, etc.), or the old ones were re-established (such as the Baltic States, Poland, etc.). However, experientially and to a certain degree intellectually, as it will be shown, the situation has been quite different. Both the political cosmologies and self-perceptions in some of these states remained 'Soviet' even after the Soviet Union collapsed. Among other cases (such as Belarus or Moldova) probably the most interesting example nowadays is contemporary Ukraine where the sense of political (not national) 'self' has been emerging within the popular consciousness only recently. It can be said that the process started in 2004 with the Orange Revolution, reaching the breaking point within the context of the unfolding crisis in 2014. Formally and politically, the Ukrainian state has existed for more than twenty years. However not only has it been constantly influenced by Russia, but also intellectually it has previously only vaguely articulated itself as an independent post-Soviet state.[283]

At this point it is important to emphasise that this dissertation puts a particular emphasis on experienced reality, not an objective, empirical cold matter which a human being can never know entirely. Liminality is experiential, and so is time in this context. Since it is

[283] Having visited a national history museum in Kyiv (as of February 2014), onecould notice the lack of representation of the rupture between Ukraine being a part of the Soviet Union and it being an actual autonomous state. The exposition of the post-USSR epoch in Ukraine is very limited and mostly dedicated to Ukrainian sports victories.

experiential, it is not as rigid as the one showed by a clock or a calendar. And the experience of life in the Soviet Union, or rather the Soviet way of life is not conditional on changes in external material factors such as currency, official statehood and institutional structures (while at the same time not being separate from such and similar issues). Therefore a sense of time can perhaps be understood in two ways: externally – as a factual change of day and night, calendar years and seasons, and internally – as experienced by the embedded, situated participants in relation to their surroundings. A night spent fighting Berkut (a now dismantled former Ukrainian special police unit) may be of epochal significance and experientially last a lifetime, and a decade spent in the thoroughly corrupt state without any prospects of change can disappear into oblivion without much identity-changing significance.

The latter is perhaps more evident in the Eastern part of Ukraine. Experientially, very little has changed in the region since the collapse of the Union: "The clothes are the same. The cars are the same. The people are the same".[284] The Donbass region, for instance, emerged as a heavy industry area in the Russian Empire, and reached its peak of production and importance during Soviet times. The disagreements of 'ownership' between the Ukrainian and Russian narratives regarding the region date back to as early as the 1980s.[285] In terms of intellectual narrative, therefore, the region's history and articulated self-consciousness is profoundly intertwined with the Soviet past. Unfortunately for the region, the Union was the main source of influence to its identity and existential teleology, which resonates nowadays as well.[286] With the fall of the Soviet Union, the political grounding for said identity was lost. On the other hand, seemingly, the weak post-USSR Ukrainian national narrative was unsuccessful in replacing the Soviet one. The condition that the region was left with as a result was the liminal state of being stuck between epochs, between political structures, no longer a part of the Soviet Union, but not completely integrated into the Ukrainian national narrative either.

The most significant manifestation of this ambiguous state is the region's recent (Russian backed) strife for separation from Ukraine. A large part of the population in Ukraine, as well as in other post-USSR countries (and beyond) demonstrates a sense of Soviet nostalgia and identifies itself with either time-distorted personal memories or an imagined

[284]Harrison Jacobs, 'These Photos Show How Eastern Ukraine Is Stuck In Its Soviet Past', *Business Insider*, http://www.businessinsider.com/eastern-ukraine-daily-life-photos-2014-9?op=1#ixzz3EDWKjK3G, (Last accessed on 24 September 2014).

[285] Andrew Wilson, 'The Donbass between Ukraine and Russia: The Use of History in Political Disputes', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (1995), pp. 265-289.

[286]Luke Harding, 'Inside the 'Donetsk People's Republic': balaclavas, Stalin flags and razorwire', *The Guardian*,http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/19/ukraine-donetsk-pro-russia-militants, (Last accessed on 2 September 2014).

alternative reality much more so than with the political actuality.[287] Experientially, the state of war in the region has invoked a heterogeneous 'Alice in Wonderland' experience of being in-between history, imagination and propaganda. Between aspiration, anger, violence, fear and determination. Between competing narratives, all of which bear plausible deniability, encouraging mythological thinking: a condition similar to the one in Emir Kusturica's film 'Underground'.[288] All the ambiguities surrounding the embedded participant leave no space for adequate assessment of political reality, resulting in either political ambivalence or radicalism. The concept of liminality captures the current situation rather better than old dichotomies such as East vs. West, communism vs. capitalism or pro-Russia vs. pro-EU/Europe. The reason is that it accounts not only for the extent of information and disinformation that determines the subject's condition but also for the human experience, which, as demonstrated in previous chapters, influences choices and politics no less than intellectual considerations.

In terms of the rest of the country, it is only in 2004-2014 that the majority of Ukraine is losing its Soviet self-perception, which was linking it to its imperial and Soviet past, and is becoming a post-Soviet state. Petro Poroshenko's declaration on 24th October 2014 that Ukraine will no longer celebrate the Defender of the Fatherland Day on 23 February is only one result of decisive changes in Ukraine's political *persona*.[289] Economically, Ukraine has signed an agreement with Poland regarding gas supply, which will liberate it from complete dependence on its eastern neighbour. Encouraged by Russia's occupation of Crimea and support for separatism in the Eastern part of the country, the Ukrainians only now, after over twenty years, are establishing a separate and relatively independent political *persona*. However, the region whose historical narrative has been much more significantly influenced by the Soviet experience, struggles with the transition much more, lingering in the critical state of temporal liminality.

[287] See Anna Blundy, 'Nostalgia for the Soviet Era Sweeps the Internet', *News Week*, http://www.newsweek.com/2014/08/08/nostalgia-soviet-era-sweeps-internet-261963.html, (Last accessed: January 30, 2015); Andrew A. Kramer, Rebels in Eastern Ukraine Dream of Reviving Soviet Heyday, *New York Times*, (Last accessed: January 30, 2015) http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/05/world/europe/rebels-in-eastern-ukraine-dream-of-reviving-soviet-heyday.html?_r=0.

[288] In Kusturica's *Underground* (1995), a group of people live in an underground bunker in Yugoslavia since the Second World War, believing that the war never ended. Ironically, their cosmology affirms itself as they emerge from the bunker to the surface precisely at the time of the regional military conflicts in the 1990s.

[289] "Ukraine will never again commemorate this holiday by following a historical battles calendar of a neighbouring country. We will honour the defenders of our Fatherland, not a foreign country's!"'Порошенко: Україна вже ніколи не святкуватиме 23 лютого', *tvi.ua*,http://tvi.ua/new/2014/08/24/poroshenko_poobicyav_scho_ukrayina_bilshe_nikoly_ne_svyatkuvatyme_23_lyutoho#, (Last accessed: 30/08/2014).

Formal liminality: Russian mask-identity and the USSR

At this point another problem emerges: how can all of the above be true if the Soviet Union factually no longer exists? For a long period of time many Western intellectuals wanted to see Russia as a new, 'modern' soon-to-be democratic country, the history of which has been interrupted by a 'communist experiment'. Factually the latter bit is fairly grounded. Indeed, the Bolsheviks destroyed the political tradition of the Russian Empire in a similar fashion as the three separations destroyed the *Rzeczpospolita*. Firstly, it removed the 'exoskeleton' of monarchic political legitimacy by overthrowing and murdering the royal family. Then it removed the social 'endoskeleton' by destroying the social fabric of the society and murdering millions of inhabitants – a modernizing process in all its destructiveness *par excellence*.[290] In a similar fashion, only less so in terms of the social aspect, the Soviet Union collapsed, which gave way to the new political identity of the Russian Federation.

Experientially, however, and in terms of the popular historical narrative, the vast territorial blob to the east of Prussia and Austria-Hungary, later to the east of the Baltics, Poland and Romania, then to the east of central Berlin, and then again to the east of the post-Soviet states has been continuously represented with an image of Russia not only in the West. In post-Soviet Eastern Europe as well, despite the popular contemporary slogan declaring the struggle against 'the petite-bourgeois nationalism and the Great Russian chauvinism' as mentioned previously, the Soviet Union was nevertheless identified with Russia. This is in addition to the fact that paradoxically Russians were among the biggest victims of the Soviet regime.[291]

The contemporary rehabilitation of some elements of the Soviet legacy by Vladimir Putin as well as the strengthening revival of the Great Russian narrative inherent from the imperial times, simply formalized the experientially already present merging of the three politically separate identity images of the imperial, Soviet and federal Russia. This is only to talk about the images, however, as there are surely many structural differences between these episodes in Russian history, starting with the social structure, the logic of power legitimacy, extent of personal freedoms, etc. Historically, however, it could also be argued that the emergence of the Revolution in Russia, similarly as the Revolution in France, was the beginning of the modern state. Just like in France, it destroyed the traditional political structure, desecrated its political legitimacy, levelled the social fabric and left a permanent

[290] Just like in the case of *Rzeczpospolita*, the traditional political legitimacy and the internal structure were the two 'skeletons', providing the Russian Empire with form, traditional value system and stable political cosmology.

[291] See: Geoffrey Hosking, *Rulers and Victims. the Russians in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

and irreversible cultural imprint. This gave birth to a completely different, previously unseen rationalist and pragmatist, economized culture, where the only existential purposes were economic production and the spread of Communism.[292] Paradoxically, such existential teleology lead to profoundly irrational social and economic projects, political ritualism and an overall absurd, permanently liminal existence in everyday life.[293] The contemporary Russian Federation, in this case, could be seen as the 'post-modern' transformation of this modern project, where the remaining Soviet political culture is mixed with elements of imperialism and attempts of transformation into a Western-styled state.

From this perspective, thus, the image of what is Soviet can be related to what is politically Russian (be it imperial or federal). At the same time, experientially, the 'post-Soviet' can be understood as those countries or rather societies which lost or are losing the dependence ties (not only in terms of power and economy, but also in terms of self-perception and political sovereignty as well as political cosmology) with the suggested image of USSR-Russia. Therefore, paradoxically, while some states remained Soviet after the collapse of the union, some states were becoming post-Soviet even before the event. It can be said that in the case of Lithuania, this process of becoming 'post-' started in 1987 and took its final shape in August-September 1991, when the last Soviet army units left the newly formed state. In the case of Poland, it started in 1980 with *Solidarnosć* and ended, same as in the case of many other Warsaw Pact countries, with the collapse of the Union. Belarus, in this context, can thus be seen as experientially still Soviet. And in case of most of Ukraine, having started with the Orange Revolution, the transformation lasted until Spring 2014.

Therefore it is legitimate to talk about the Ukrainian crisis as a post-Soviet or anti-Soviet transition, as anachronistic and paradoxical as it may sound in relation to 'objective' temporality as well as official political formality.[294] This distinction also correlates to the fact that both Lithuania and Poland were independent states before the Soviet occupation and maintained an anti-Soviet resistance throughout its entire period. Moreover, their post-Soviet political identities have been also heavily influenced by their pre-Soviet historical experience, providing substantial grounding for self-articulation.

[292] This kind of existential condition where 'growth' and 'progress' are the only criteria defining existential teleology is somewhat similar to the contemporary market logics as well as the 'character' of cancerous tumors.
[293] See for example: Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (California: University of California Press, 1997). Also see appendices 2 and 3.
[294]Sergei Zhuk, "Ukrainian Maidan as the Last Anti-Soviet Revolution, Or the Methodological Dangers of Soviet Nostalgia (Notes of the American Ukrainian Historian from Inside the Field of Russian Studies in the United States)," *Ab Imperio* 3 (2014), 195-208.

Spatial liminality: separation, division, unification

However, the process of becoming post-Soviet and especially the experience of liminality in this context does not only entail changes in relation to the 'Russia-USSR' image, as it was the case for the Baltic States. It may entail other kinds of transformation which influence the emergence of the new political mask-identities. One such change is the experience of spatial transformation. I will distinguish three types of such a transformation that can be observed in the post-Soviet space: separation, unification and division. The common element between these experiences is the liminal condition invoked by the process, where the previously established structures collapse in some way or the other, and the new emerge, being confirmed by human participation and political practice.

In the case of the Baltic States, Poland, Hungary and some others in relation to the Soviet Union and in the case of Balkan States in relation to Yugoslavia, we may talk about the process of separation. In the Lithuanian case, in order for it to become an independent post-Soviet state, it had to break loose, to separate itself from the political body that it previously (first of all experientially) belonged to. It had to oppose the legitimacy of the Soviet government, to articulate itself anew, and both politically and intellectually step up to the new political identity that it now assumed. In doing so, and through defending its choice during the 'January events' (confirming it experientially), it realized its new authentic presence as both a legitimate formal state and the separate political *persona*. Ukraine and Ukrainians, by comparison, had not completed this step up (despite the Orange Revolution, which was not successful in fully securing the psychological independence from Russia) until the 2014 crisis and its aftermath. The analogue to the 'January events' there was the drama at the Maidan, where people, supporting the post-Soviet narrative overthrew Yanukovich's regime. In a more extreme case of Yugoslavia, the multiple separations were thoroughly violent, resulting in numerous wars and a prolonged crisis state as well as embedded ethnic tensions within and between some newly-formed Balkan nation states.

Another type of liminal transition, which expresses itself spatially, is division. In this case, the division of Czechoslovakia is the most significant exemplification. The crisis that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union was one of the triggers to both of these divisions. The difference from the process of separation here is that the previously uniform political body split into two relatively spatially and morally equal parts.

> As secessionism was not a decisive political force in Slovakia, the break-up of the CSFR was not the result of a Slovak struggle for independence: it was not a Slovak secession. This fact distinguishes the events in the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic from the break-up of Yugoslavia and partly also the Soviet Union. In the two latter cases the leaders of minorities managed with great efforts to break away

> from a state dominated by a different group. In the CSFR it was the rejection of the common state by the political leaders of the Czech majority that was the direct cause of the break-up.[295]

The last type of experience of the political transformation is the unification, which happened in Germany. Timothy Garton Ash described his experience of the event and the liminal condition both spatially and existentially, in which the Germans from both sides found themselves in:

> It is very difficult to describe the quality of this experience because what they actually did was so stunningly ordinary. In effect, they just took a bus from Hackney or Dagenham to Piccadilly Circus, and went shopping in the West End. Berliners walked the streets of Berlin. What could be more normal? And yet, what could be more fantastic! […] Everyone looks the same as they make their way home – except for the tell-tale Western carrier-bag. But everyone is inwardly changed, changed utterly. 'Now people are standing up straight', says a hotel porter. 'They are speaking their minds. Even work is more fun. I think the sick will get up from their hospital beds'. […] This was most dramatically visible in Berlin. Where previously a West Berlin underground line ran through ghostly, sealed underground stations in East Berlin, the doors of the train now opened, and East Berliners leapt out. The whole mental geography of Berlin changed overnight. What had been the edge became the centre.[296]

Thus the liminal experience, the miraculous normality, of 'Berliners walking in Berlin' was the starting point for the new and difficult self-rearticulating of both Germany and Berlin. The city has remained a liminal and paradoxical space. Built for 8 million inhabitants, but inhabited by 4, with a scar in the middle, separating the two sides of the city, it is a place not only for notorious night life, street art culture and fashion industry (a particularly liminal sphere), but also to some of the most notorious neo-Nazi as well as far-left organisations.

To conclude: in this section, I have briefly discussed the possible modalities of post-Soviet liminal experience, which are central to political identity formation in the Easter and Central Europe. The concept of liminality is key in understanding the complex historical and contemporary processes in the region. Three forms of liminality can be distinguished: the temporal, the formal and the spatial. These may be seen as the external parameters for the emergence of the particular regional cosmology and political culture. The experience of transformation and ambiguity are present in all of these and can be taken as the basis for understanding the processes of political identity formation in the region.

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[295]Paal Sigurd Hilde, "Slovak Nationalism and the Break-Up of Czechoslovakia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 51 (2010), 649.

[296]Timothy Garton Ash, *The Magic Lantern: The Revolution of '89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin and Prague* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 75.

5.3 Political cosmology, emergence of images

Chapter 3 described several types of images that constitute Lithuanian political cosmology. This section will demonstrate that the same types of images can also be found in political cosmologies of other post-USSR states, most of which are grounded in historical mythology and yet are particularly important in contemporary politics in the region and the political identities of the states or other actors involved. In order to substantiate this claim, I will discuss an image of a person in three different kinds of post-Soviet states as examples: Poland, a predominantly Catholic post-Warsaw pact state; Estonia, a predominantly Protestant smaller former Soviet state; and Russia, a predominantly Orthodox central state of the Soviet Union.[297]

The evidence for the claim about the importance of political cosmology and various images involved is abundant; therefore a secondary objective for this section is to explore the variety of historical, political and cultural contexts from which these images can be drawn. I will focus on three different characters: first, the historical figure of Tadeusz Kościuszko in the context of Poland; second, the mythological, fictional figure of Kalevipoeg in the context of Estonia; third, the figure of Lenin in the context of Russia.

These personalities were chosen based on several criteria. First, they are related to three different epochs, in order to demonstrate that the temporal aspect of the life of an actual personality bears little resemblance to the role that the image plays in political cosmology. Therefore, next to Vytautas, representing the medieval period, I chose Lenin, representing the 20th century history, Kościuszko, representing the 18th – 19th century romantic epoch and a fictional character Kalevipoeg, whose existence is a-temporal. Secondly, these figures are of particular importance to their respective identity narratives which I relate them to. Lenin was and is one of the most important figures in Russian history, Kalevipoeg is at the core of Estonian national narrative and Kościuszko is a very important figure to Poles as well as Lithuanians.[298] These are three completely unrelated examples, chosen from three completely different post-USSR contexts. Regardless, the aim of this comparison is to demonstrate that as images of personalities, and in relation to political identity, they all serve common purposes and their popular articulation in essence have a common logic. It is their function as images that have shaped both political identity formation and the nature of identity politics in the chosen countries and beyond.

[297] I mention religion here because, as demonstrated in previous chapters, there is a link between the political and spiritual culture, which was of paramount importance in the pre-modern societies. However, I intend to demonstrate that despite the difference in the denomination of Christianity that is dominant in the society, and despite the level of its religiousness, images of persons still play a similar role in different political cosmologies.

[298] Kościuszko was chosen instead of another obvious 'candidate', Jósef Piłsudsky (1867-1935), trying to maintain the temporal diversity mentioned above.

Poland: Kościuszko

Tadeusz Kościuszko (1746 – 1817) was a revolutionary, a general in the American Civil War and the commander of the Polish-Lithuanian uprising of 1794 (also called the Kościuszko uprising) who tried to sustain the collapsing *Rzeczpospolita*. On all these accounts he is one of the most significant personalities in Polish national history.[299] His image played a particularly important role before the emergence of the modern, interwar Poland, i.e. in the period from the late nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century, when revolutionary ideas were key in shaping the articulation of the modern Polish political *persona*, especially during the uprisings of 1830-31 and 1863, and up to the early twentieth century.

> During the 1830s and 1840s some significant overtones were introduced into the legend. On the one hand, radical thinkers found fault with the uprising of 1794 as a movement that was solely composed of noblemen; its leader was labelled an ineffective politician of 'half-measures' who had shirked thoroughly radical reforms. On the other hand, the accomplishments of Kościuszko in the field of reform were emphasised; democrats and romantic poets worshipped him as the first leader in Polish history who had appealed to the whole nation without distinction of estate and who opposed the feudal serfdom of peasants […]
>
> The celebration of the forty-fourth anniversary of his death in 1861 began a series of demonstrations which finally led to the January uprising of 1863 […]
>
> At the turn of the century, the cult of Kościuszko reached its apogee. The real figure was replaced by a disembodied man and a projection of Polish wishes; he became a figure created in order to raise spirits and improve the frame of mind of a subjugated nation. But at the end of the nineteenth century, the nation's hero also became a model of frequently contradictory attributes and virtues, much like a potluck supper where everyone brings his or her own dish to the meal.[300]

After World War One, Kościuszko's image was overshadowed by another Polish leader, Józef Pilsudsky.[301] Nevertheless, he still remained important to the dominant Polish historical narrative up until nowadays. Magdalena Micińska describes how the image was consciously and unconsciously adapted to various political contexts, depending on contemporary conditions and political needs throughout the twentieth century.[302]

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[299] It is important to remind the reader that *Rzeczpospolita* consisted of many ethnicities, and several modern nations, including Baltic States, Belarus, Ukraine and others, apart from Poland claim the heritage of the Republic. He is particularly important to Belarussian popular historical narrative and perhaps slightly less so to Lithuanians.

[300] Magdalena Micińska, "The Myth of Tadeusz Kościuszko in the Polish Mind (1794–1997)," *European Review of History: Revue Européenne D'histoire* 5, no. 2 (1998), 192-195.

[301] Led by the neo-Romanticist ideas, he sought to re-establish Poland on the basis of *Rzeczpospolita* historical heritage, thus rendering modern Polish identity the narrative continuation of the pre-modern *Rzeczpospolitan* one. In Lithuanian historical narrative, Pilsudsky is most often established as a negative figure, an aggressor who illegally occupied Vilnius region, which to modern Lithuanian narrative was the capital of their own political *persona*, as discussed in chapter two.

[302] Micińska, 'The myth of Tadeusz Kościuszko in the Polish mind (1794–1997)', pp. 195-96.

Kościuszko's heroic image still inspires some Polish academics to write panegyric texts about his personality.[303] In the early 1990s, when the public discussions about the format and content of the Polish constitution were taking place, the nationalist part of the society used Kościuszko's image as a ground for supporting an argument about the uniqueness and importance of Polish ethnicity:

> The inscription, in the parliamentary constitutional project, of the principle that "the Nation, it is all the citizens of the Republic" will cause that every citizen from the administrative point of view will have the right to decide about Polish national affairs. A foreigner, who not long ago settled in Poland and received Polish citizenship, will have identical rights in the affairs of our Nation, as the descendants of Tadeusz Kościuszko [...] How is it possible, that none of the deputies present at the enactment of the preamble, cried TREASON.[304]

However in our context, perhaps the crucial point is the significance of Kościuszko's image for the formation of Poland's post-Soviet identity, notably the struggle of *Solidarność*:

> As the Polish cultural mythology of the 1980s worked across the confines of time, it drew on the traumatic inheritance of the national community. The events of 1980-81 were telescoped into yet another lost war of independence, and the imprisoned members of the political opposition were seen as heirs to the nineteenth-century freedom fighters who had been exiled to Siberia. The palpable sign of such time warps was a resurgence of mourning crosses. Polish men and women once again began to wear small crosses made of plain, black-coated metal, with the Polish eagle in place of the Passion. Similar crosses had been popular before and after the failed insurrection of 1863-64.[305]

This way, the image of a person invokes various historical, emotional and political associations, both encouraging the manifestation of identity and political struggle. In terms of narrative, it connects three historical episodes of Polish independence struggles: the uprising of the 1794, the rebellion of 1863-64 and the *Solidarność* struggle of 1980-81. It merged these temporally distant events into a single common experience that constituted what would later develop into an independent Polish post-Soviet political *persona*.[306]

Estonia: Kalevipoeg

A slightly less prominent example is Kalevipoeg, a hero from a national Estonian eponymous epic, which was written in the nineteenth century by Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald. It was based on an ancient Estonian oral tradition, and is kindred to the

[303] See for example: Wojciech Flera, "Does the Life of Tadeusz Kościuszko Provide Lessons for Today?" *Polish American Studies* 64, no. 1 (2007), 75-78.
[304]Wojciech Cejrowski, quoted in: Geneviève Zubrzycki, ""We, the Polish Nation": Ethnic and Civic Visions of Nationhood in Post-Communist Constitutional Debates," *Theory and Society* 30, no. 5 (2001), 645.
[305]Halina Filipowicz, "Textualizing Trauma: From Valęsa to Kościuszko in Polish Theatre of the 1980s," *Theatre Journal* 48, no. 4 (1996), 444.
[306]Another noteworthy aspect in this context is the quasi-religious charachterof the entire symbolic imaginary.

Finnish Kalevala.[307] Jüri Talvet calls it a 'stem text' of Estonian nation: "it is not simply an epic of a Finno-Ugric people, but the Estonian national epic".[308] According to David Ilmar Lepasaar Beecher,

> On the whole, 19th-century epics from Lönnrot's *Kalevala* to Longfellow's *Hiawatha* sought to do for their respective nations what MacPherson's *Ossian* had done for Scotland. They were attempts to recover (or imagine) a rich and unified cultural tradition in the distant past that would serve as a basis for a contemporary national identity. But the mere possession of a national epic in the early and middle portions of the 19th century – and having it proclaimed authentic – may have mattered more than its content. The vague, romantic idea of a national identity lurking among the misty folk traditions was enough to affirm a contemporary pride.[309]

The modern poetic epic recites the adventures of a fictional hero Kalevipoeg (son of Kalev, a mythological character in Estonian folklore).[310] He performs various deeds that are variously more heroic or more mischievous in character, including the construction of Estonian cities and the creation of Estonian society.[311] Unlike the case of Lithuania where the political cosmology and the modern mask-identity had plenty of material to establish its historical narrative in the 19th century, the Estonian modern political *persona* had no pre-modern political heritage. Lithuania had the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Poland had *Rzeczpospolita* and Russia had imperial history as the basis for the formation of their narratives. Estonian lands, on the other hand, throughout the entire medieval history politically belonged either to the Germans, the Danish, the Swedes, the Polish *Rzeczpospolita* or the Russians. Therefore the creation of Estonian political mask-identity had to rely on the poetic and literary tradition.

Kalevipoeg is a romantic intellectual project that is symptomatic of its epoch.[312] Like Lithuanian opposition to Russia and Poland, the new modern Estonian identity is primarily based on folk culture, language and literature and emerged in opposition to the predominant German nobility culture and Russian political sovereignty. Not unlike the case of Vytautas in the Lithuanian context, Kalevipoeg became an epic hero to Estonians in terms of an ethnically based historical narrative. During the struggle for the first political independence in the country's history, Kalevipoeg was particularly important.

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[307] The cultural distinction from the Finnish is, however, important to the modern Estonian nationalism.

[308] Jüri Talvet, "Constructing a Mythical Future City for a Symbiotic Nation from the European "Periphery"," *Interlitteraria* 14, no. 1 (2009), 85.

[309] David Ilmar Lepasaar Beecher, "Kalevipoeg's Mistake", *Lituanus: Lithuanian Quarterly Journal Of Arts And Sciences*, http://www.lituanus.org/2001/01_3_05.htm, (Last accessed: September 12, 2014).

[310] According to Estonian folklore, a hill in central Tallinn, is a tumulus mound piled over Kalev's grave. Both the governmental building and the parliament of Estonia are located on this hill, which is also very symbolic.

[311] This mythological urban genealogy is similar to other cases, such as the establishment of Vilnius by Grand Duke Gediminas and even that of Rome by Romulus and Remus.

[312] Jüri Talvet, 'Constructing a Mythical Future City for a Symbiotic Nation from the European "Periphery". Fr. R. Kreutzwald's Epic Kalevipoeg', pp. 93-95.

> The work became, indeed, a tool in the hands of Estonian national politicians, before and after our first political independence (1918–1939), between the two world wars. However, one should not forget that the official anthem of the Socialist Soviet Republic of Estonia (in the wording of the writer Johannes Semper) started with a direct reference to *Kalevipoeg.*
>
> "Go on strong and perdure, valiant people of Kalev."[313]

Therefore the role of *Kalevipoeg* as an image was twofold. First of all, it was used as the ritual and mythological basis for the creation of interwar Estonian national imaginary. On the other hand, in the Soviet Union, due to its pagan-inspired origins and social symbolism, the epic and the image of the hero was used in a similar fashion as it was done in Lithuania: in order to replace the political influence of Christianity, standardized local folk culture was used to enforce and even create 'politically correct' images and to translate them into popular consciousness, representing the so called 'liberation of the working class'.[314] However, Kalevipoeg, akin to the neo-pagan culture in Lithuania, was also used as a means of cultural resistance to the regime:

> […] not only the Lutheran Church but also Estonian literature such as the *Kalevipoeg* (an Estonian epic folk tale), nationalist folk songs, historical monuments such as the Pik Hermann Castle, and art [were used]. These elements combine to provide the symbols, ritual, and beliefs which integrated the society and strengthened it against Soviet cultural onslaughts.[315]

According to Guntis Šmidchens, during the strife for independence from the Soviet Union, Kalevipoeg became one of the sources of inspiration for the peaceful struggle against the regime in a manner that was similar to the historical king Mindaugas in Lithuania and the fictional Bearslayer (Lāčplēsis) in Latvia:

> All three heroes were warriors when they emerged as national symbols in the nineteenth century, but through series of adaptations, they lost many of their violent characteristics. They became more human. Their desacralized versions were closer to the audiences who read the stories or watched the heroes on stage, furthering the sense of mutual responsibility rather than submission to a charismatic leader.[316]

Thus Kalevipoeg, a fictional character was established as an embodiment of the Estonian nation itself, also inspiring the first struggle for the independence in the Interwar period. The associative content of his image that was attained through the reciprocation of his story in the late Soviet Estonian society, later on helped to shape the peaceful character of Estonian political resistance.

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[313] *Ibid*., 86-87.
[314] Guntis Šmidchens, "National Heroic Narratives in the Baltics as a Source for Nonviolent Political Action," *Slavic Review* 66, no. 3 (2007), 493.
[315] Andrew Hart, "The Role Of The Lutheran Church In Estonian Nationalism," *Religion in Eastern Europe*, 13, no. 3 (1993): 11.
[316] Šmidchens, National Heroic Narratives in the Baltics as a Source for Nonviolent Political Action, 485.

Russia: Lenin

If Kościuszko and Kalevipoeg are less well-known characters internationally, the figure of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin does not require any introduction. Lenin's image is manifold and diversely interpreted worldwide. To some he represents a great revolutionary leader and founder of the first socialist state. To others Lenin is an initiator of the darkest and deadliest period in the history of their countries and families. Yet others see him as the 'good guy' compared with the 'bad guy' figure of Josef Stalin. And some simply acknowledge his classical Marxist political theory, seeing him as one of many distant historical figures. Despite the mass killings that Lenin pursued and propagated, his political theory is taught in some Western universities, and he is often venerated for his social experiments with Russian and foreign people. Such paradoxes show the power of an image of a person not only in the post-Soviet but also in the Western world. It is a good example of how ideas associated with the image and the political charge that the image bears overshadow a person's actual deeds and the terror that his experiments actually brought about.[317]

When it comes to the various Russian historical narratives that underpin Russia's political identity, the situation remains equally diverse. Having enjoyed the status of a 'secular god' in the Soviet Union, after its collapse, the popularity of Lenin's image withered. This was due to many factors, including the disillusionment with Gorbachev's *perestroika* (Gorbachev justified his political line by condemning Stalinism and "reviving" Leninism), as well as in many cases – with Communism in general.[318] "Lenin has rejoined the ranks of mere mortals. [However] Remnants of Lenin's cult are still a highly visible part of society."[319]The polls performed in the first decade of the twenty-first century demonstrated a continuous decline of Lenin's popularity.[320] But the most recent survey shows that next to Stalin, whose popularity has increased even more, Lenin is also being seen in increasingly positive light.[321]The sense of nostalgia is still to be felt among the

[317]Rudolph Rummel in his book 'Lethal Politics: Soviet Genocide and Mass Murder since 1917' presents an account of Lenin's victims. Rudolph Joseph Rummel, *Lethal Politics: Soviet Genocide and Mass Murder since 1917* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1990), 1-50.
[318]Trevor Smith, "The Collapse of the Lenin Personality Cult in Soviet Russia 1985-1995," *Historian* 60, no. 2 (2007), 325-343.
[319]*Ibid*., 343.
[320] "Популярность Ленина и Сталина с годами падает – опрос [Lenin's and Stalin's Popularity Gradually Falls – A Survey]", *RIA.ru*,http://ria.ru/society/20081117/155348018.html, (Last accessed: January 23, 2015).
[321] "Опрос: больше 50% россиян поддерживает Сталина [Survey: Over 50% Russians Support Stalin]," *BBC*, (Last accesed: January 23, 2015), http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/russia/2015/01/150120_russia_stalin_poll.

population.[322]And despite the suggestions for burial, the mummified Soviet dictator still lies in his mausoleum in the middle of Moscow, visited by millions of tourists, and his birthday is still being celebrated there by communists and supporters annually.

Therefore, even though having shrunk from the deity-like status, Lenin's image remains without doubt an important part of the complex and controversial Russian historical narrative. Nina Tumarkin suggested that the Soviet deification of the image can be traced to the Russian Orthodox peasant culture. The phenomenon that is called 'naïve monarchism' was a particular relationship within the Russian *narod* to their tsar. "To them he remained, at least until 1905, their *batiushka* (little father), who was kind hearted, connected with God, and through this divine link bound personally to each of them".[323] Indeed, according to Tumarkin, a secularized version of the phenomenon of naïve monarchism persisted in the cult of Lenin as well as of other Soviet leaders.[324] Nowadays there still seems to be a need for a 'strong hand' leader figure among the majority of Russians, which perfectly corresponds to Russia's centuries-old monarchic as well as Soviet traditions, but could also signify the need of rigid stability under the abovementioned circumstances of formal liminality.[325]

The existential symbolism that Lenin's image attained in Soviet society is also tied to another experiential factor from contemporary times. In the beginning of this chapter, it was argued that the political and cultural phenomenon that is called Russia, be it in its imperial, Soviet or federal form, still keeps a strong grip on some politically post-Soviet states in the region (most notably, Belarus, Moldova and eastern Ukraine). However, I also argued that these regions are still experientially Soviet – even though the Soviet Union collapsed about twenty-five years ago. Interestingly, since it is thus hard to grasp the borders between the experientially Soviet and post-Soviet worlds, Lenin's image becomes at least a relative denominator. In particular, I am referring to the statues of Lenin in the political post-Soviet territories. It seems that in places that have lost or are losing their Soviet political cosmology (such as Baltic States, Central Europe and quite recently – western Ukraine among others) Lenin's statues have been torn down. Olesia Mamchych, a

[322] "Soviet Nostalgia in Putin's Russia: New generation of Pioneers goes back to the USSR on Red Square" YouTube video, 1:09, posted by "Ukraine News Online," May 18,2014,https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e88QaosIwaU.

[323]Nina Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives!: The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

[324]A similar phenomenon can even be observed in the contemporary Russian politics, with the surprising popularity of Vladimir Putin's image in 2014 as well as his tsar-like treatment by the Moscow's Orthodox Church throughout his cadencies.

[325] In the survey done on March 2014, only 15 percent of respondents said that "under no circumstances should the power in Russa be concentrated in the hands of a single man". "Россияне о сильном лидере и единовластии [Russians on Strong Leadership and Autocracy]," *Levada.ru*,http://www.levada.ru/08-04-2014/rossiyane-o-silnom-lidere-i-edinovlastii, (Last accessed: January 26, 2015).

Ukrainian writer, reflects on this experience of recent transformation in Maidan, during Western Ukraine's transition into a post-Soviet condition, also relating it to the *leninopad* (the fall of Lenin statues):

> There is no doubt that we have changed. After these events the percentage of people who are ready to work for Ukraine and treat their civic duties with awareness has considerably increased. Such situations provide a sudden leap. We have experienced it and if we take hold and grow mature, we will stand the chance to break away and finish with this Soviet-type 'bog' in ourselves. Every Lenin statue that fell brings us closer to Paris.[326]

Around 330 (out of approximately 1500 in total) Lenin's monuments were torn down in four months between February and June 2014 in Ukraine.[327] This signifies the experiential self-liberation from the 'Soviet-type 'bog'' taking place in the country, as it gradually becomes a post-Soviet, Lenin statue-free experiential space.[328] It is also closely connected to assuming civic consciousness, as becoming post-Soviet and independent of Russian imperial political cosmology also implies the political condition of Ukrainians as independent citizens, not as vassals to the 'tsar' in Moscow.

However, places where the presence of Lenin's statues is still widespread (large parts of Russia, eastern Ukraine, Belarus among others) remain experientially Soviet, or belonging to the sphere of Russian imperial political cosmology. Here the Soviet Union, not in terms of power structures or even power relations, but in terms of (self-) representation equates to Russia, be it imperial or federal (neo-imperial?). It is true that Lenin's statues have fallen in Russia itself, yet many of them still remain, which signifies two things. Firstly, that the Soviet historical narrative is still strong and significant in the Russian society. Secondly, that it is being contested by other ones, for instance by the imperial one. This is evidenced via the resurging popularity of the image of Tsar Nicholas II next to Lenin.[329] But perhaps even more so by the extent of support that the claim that by occupying Crimea (which was once a part of Russian Empire), Russia restored 'historical justice', has

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[326] Maria Yuzich, "Every Lenin statue that fell brings us closer to Paris", *day.kiev.ua*,http://www.day.kiev.ua/en/article/culture/every-lenin-statue-fell-brings-us-closer-paris, (Last accessed: September 17, 2014).

[327] A list with pictures of the torn down statues can be fuond here: "Памятники Ленину, снесённые на Украине с февраля 2014 года (список, фотографии) [Lenin's Memorials, Torn Down in Ukraine since February 2014 (List, Photographs)]," *Leninstatues.ru*,http://leninstatues.ru/leninopad, (Last accessed September 17, 2014).

[328] The process is not happening without resistance. There have been demonstrations and violent clashes in several mostly eastern Ukrainian cities, when some Ukrainian inhabitants were opposing the tearing down of the dictator's statues. (See: Srećko Horvat, "Ukraine's fallen statues of Lenin are not just a rejection of Russia", *The Guardian*, (Last accesed: September 17, 2014), http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/mar/16/ukraine-lenin-statues-rejection-russia-eu#start-of-comments.)

[329] "Опрос: больше 50% россиян поддерживает Сталина [Survey: Over 50% Russians Support Stalin]", *BBC*, (Last accesed: Januray 23, 2015), http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/russia/2015/01/150120_russia_stalin_poll.

received in Russian society.[330] The paradox here in terms of the narrative lies in the fact that the occupation was celebrated by Vladimir Putin on 'Victory Day', a celebration of Soviet origins, packed with Soviet sentiments (next to the imagery of 'fighting Nazism').[331] Yet it was in the Soviet Union that Crimea became an integral part of Ukraine. Therefore we may observe an interesting process of merging of two factually contesting narratives, which provides a phenomenal support for Vladimir Putin's policy. Next to Stalin, Lenin's image emerges here as a signifier of the Soviet part of the schismatic Russian historical narrative. And it is Lenin's statues that stand as a demarcating signifier of the experiential Soviet space, constituting a particular political identity in the region whilst not necessarily corresponding to actual state borders in some eastern parts of Ukraine.

Therefore all three images of persons, be it a nineteenth-century independence fighter, a fictional character or a Soviet dictator, play important symbolical and emotional roles in their respective societies. First, they add existential value to political identity they are related to. Second, they represent various associative values. Finally, they justify political choices, struggles and decisions. Most importantly, it is such images of persons, events, the self, etc. that comprise political cosmologies, which consist of emotional and rational, logical and associative, factual and imagined networks of meaning. And these networks set a context for the political and existential *persona*. In the post-Soviet region these are particularly important precisely due to the temporal, formal and spatial liminality, the condition of in between-ness, in which people in these societies are situated.

5.4 Clash of mythologies: same images, contesting narratives

So far this dissertation has discussed images mostly in the context of a single, more or less uniform historical narrative. Even though positions on the exact path to independence in Lithuania varied, there was a general common political teleology within the society that united various narratives, which could be briefly described as moving away from the Soviet occupation and towards the free Western world. This argument is based upon various images in the context of a Lithuanian narrative as well as images of various personalities in the contexts of Polish, Estonian and Russian narratives.

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[330] In the survey on March 2014, one third of the respondents in Russia gave this justification for the occupation. "Происходящее в Украине, Крыму и реакция России [Events in Ukraine, Crimea and the Reaction by Russia]," *Levada.ru*,http://www.levada.ru/26-03-2014/proiskhodyashchee-v-ukraine-krymu-i-reaktsiya-rossii, (Last accessed: January 26, 2015).

[331] "Ukraine: Putin hails Crimea's 'historic' return amid deadly violence," *CBC.ca*,http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/ukraine-putin-hails-crimea-s-historic-return-amid-deadly-violence-1.2636814, (Last accessed: January 26, 2015).

But what happens if there are several contesting narratives over a single image? What if the same image means different things in different political cosmologies, with clashing teleology? What political implication does this have in the post-Soviet context and (how) does it affect the perception of the political 'self' and the 'other'? In order to answer these questions I will explore the Maidan civil movement that led to the fall of the former president Viktor Yanukovich in February 2014. I will analyse the perceptions of this movement from the perspectives of three different narratives (the Western European, the Russian and the Ukrainian), describing the perception of two images that are of main importance in the context: that of 'the West', and of 'being right-wing'. I will then examine how the perception of these images influences the perception of the entire political situation surrounding it, and how the identities of the political 'self' and 'the other' form in this context.

It is important to emphasise that I will focus on the images and narratives that emerged from within certain social spaces – meetings, press, etc., not necessarily about the political process as it factually happened. It is yet too early, if it will ever be possible, to describe the objective factuality of the events that took place in Kyiv between November 2013 and late February 2014. However, I will endeavour to show how images that arose within the process had an influence on actual politics and on the disposition of some of the key actors involved, which affected actual events and shaped the political process.

Western narrative: Euromaidan as a pro-European national movement

The protests in Kyiv started when the then-president Viktor Yanukovich cancelled the long lasting negotiations with the European Union regarding the association agreement in favour of closer economic ties with Russia. Crowds of protesters went to the streets in disagreement with this unilateral action, which was but a tip of the iceberg of the government's corruption.[332] The protesters were met with brutal police force. The conflict escalated further, as the protesters grew in numbers and set up a tent town at the Independence Square in central Kyiv, eventually barricading the premises and assuming control of several streets, government buildings and a second square (the European Square) nearby.

[332]It is important to note that Maidan was indeed representative of all the Ukrainian population, ranging from the poorest to the richest, while mostly representing the educated middle aged upper social strata, including population from all regions of Ukraine, various ethnicities, linguistic identities, gender, age, education and other criteria. On this see Olga Onuch, "Who were the Protesters?" *Journal of Democracy* 25, no. 3 (2014), 44-51.This is in opposition to accusations from the Russian side, claiming that Maidan was regionally Western-based, linguistically Ukrainian and not representative of the entire Ukrainian population. My personal experience from a short trip to Maidan in February 2014 confirms this, as I saw the variety of people participating in the protest and interviewed several protesters from all parts of Ukraine.

The protest movement assumed the name of Euromaidan, as the protesters were expecting support from the European Union and the Western world in their struggle. However, the attitudes soon changed as the protesters realized that the support they were expecting would not come so readily. Thus the 'Euro-' part actually lost its political importance and various kinds of national symbolism came to the fore. In the Western media, however, the protests were perceived through a Western political cosmological lens:

> Most Member States viewed the situation in Ukraine primarily through the prism of relations with Russia. Most often, however, this simply came down to pragmatic economic interests. Here, the equation was simple. Bi-lateral trade volume with Russia is in most cases much more valuable than with Ukraine, and the latter has in most cases been diminishing further since the onset of the Europe-wide economic crisis. Coupled with a very limited interest and confidence in Ukraine's democratic and European future, this inclined the majority of Member States to take a permissive position towards Russia […] It is thus only a small group of European countries, including the UK, the V4 countries, Sweden and non-EU member Norway, that perceived the protests not just as a rejection of a local system of governance, but as a stand for broader democratic norms and European values.[333]

One popular image that started circulating in the media particularly after the Ukrainian riot police Berkut started not only brutally beating, but also killing its citizens, was what will be called here the image of 'being right-wing'. Around January 2014, the protests became particularly violent from the protesters' side (despite several previous occasions that seemed more like provocations from the government's side, either by Berkut, or by the hired thugs, popularly called *titushky*). The use of the iconic Molotov cocktails started then as well as did the emergence of various protesters' self-defence groups among which, several, such as *Pravyi Sektor* (trans. Right Sector), assumed Western 'right-wing'-style aesthetics and rhetoric.[334] Indeed, what the Western audiences saw, was crude snow and junk barricades with barbed wire, burning tires, masked protesters with sticks and Molotov cocktails, and nationalist-styled insignia. Maidan was accused of having a 'right-wing' ideology not only through the participation of the aforementioned *Pravyi Sektor* and other 'self-defence groups', but also through the image that one of the opposition's Maidan-supporting parties has.[335]

The specificity of the image of 'being right-wing' in the West, however, is twofold. First of all, due to the historical Second World War experience, and the consequential mythologizing of this experience (as well as the sense of victimhood attached to it) in the Western political culture, this image became an extremely powerful and abused

[333]Anita Sobják and Roderick Parkes, "Understanding EU Action during "Euromaidan:" Lessons for the Next Phase," *PISM Strategic Files* 41 (2014), 1-11.
[334]This imaginary was later particularly strongly and widely used by Russian propaganda (especially the news agency Russia Today) to manipulate Western imaginary into associating these groups with their own historical and political narratives of far right radicalism.
[335]The *Svoboda* party has in the past voiced openly anti-semitic sentiments.

scapegoating tool.[336] Accusing someone of being 'right-wing', or more strictly of being 'far right', became a very useful and potent way of demonising any political, social or cultural phenomenon.

Secondly, the associative applicability of the image of being 'right-wing' is also particularly wide. In the Western political cosmology, completely different and often largely unrelated categories and contexts are being placed under this umbrella title, rendering it over-extensive and thus meaningless. Often unrelated ideas like 'biological' racism, militarism, Nazism, homophobia, racism (paradoxically, understood as perceiving a difference within others based on other than race factors, such as nationality, culture, habits, name, etc.), nationalism, individualism, chauvinism, libertarianism, traditionalism, fascism, royalism, sexism, national bolshevism, aristocraticism, patriotism, state-centralism, anti-egalitarianism, and many others '-isms' can all be to different extents and in different forms related to the image of 'being right wing'. However, all the mentioned associative notions come with their own imagery, symbolism and varying associative, emotional charges. This way, the image of being 'right-wing' is able to demonise or scapegoat almost any political position, while at the same time absolutely disregarding the specificity and the actual meaning as well as the contextual premises of the phenomenon in question.

Indeed the abundance of intertwining symbolism and layers of political identity in Maidan was astonishing and would require a separate study. By February 2014, the protest site and central Kyiv in general became a venue for an amalgam of most varied views, political declarations and symbols.[337] One could see walls covered with stylized swastika–resembling ancient Slavic symbols (or perhaps swastikas resembling Slavic symbols), romanticized images of Cossacks and Taras Shevchenko, black and red 'Banderite' interwar independence movement flags, pictures of a young girl in a traditional Ukrainian costumes, *Pravyi Sektor* stickers, neo-Nazi insignia. However, next to those there were 'leftisit' anarchy signs, peace signs, Lithuanian 'Gediminas's towers', abundant religious iconography, political caricatures, A.C.A.B (a 70'ies British anarchist slogan 'All Coppers Are Bastards') signs. Ukrainian, European Union, US, Canadian, German, Polish, Lithuanian flags hung on barricades and fences.

[336] A particularly popular rhetorical trick is the 'that's what Hitler did' argument, used by all sides in the Ukrainian crisis, accusing each other of Hitler-like political methods. See: "German minister compares Putin's Ukraine moves to Hitler in 1938," *Reuters*,http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/31/us-ukraine-russia-germany-idUSBREA2U0S420140331, (Last accessed: January 30, 2015); "RT Goes Beyond the Pale," *Euromaidan Press*, http://euromaidanpress.com/2014/07/15/rt-beyond-the-pale-genocide-nazis-hitler-wmd-junta-hoax/, (Last accessed: January 30, 2015); "Ukraine reminiscent of Hitler's Germany – President Yanukovych," *Voice of Russia*, http://voiceofrussia.com/2014_05_12/Ukraine-reminiscent-of-Hitler-s-Germany-President-Yanukovich-1209/, (Last accessed: January 30, 2015).

[337] See appendix 9 for author's pictures from Maidan in Kyiv, February 2014.

Different more or less radical ideological messages on walls around Kyiv in February 2014. These are next to an abundance of pro-European, and pro-democratic ones. 'Enough suffering EU'(top left); '*Pravyi Sektor*' for national revolution'(top center); 'Glory to Ukraine' with a Ukrainian coat of arms shown as 'more' than a Euro sign and Rubble sign (top right); An anarchist sign with a celtic cross drawn on top, which is widely used by fascists, opposing anarchists (middle left); A defaced anarchy sign (middle center); An anarchist sign next to Nazi symbols (middle right); Lithuanian Gediminas' Towers sign with a note: 'For your and our freedom' (bottom left); Unclear signs and geometrical figures defacing what seems to be Nazi signs (bottom center and bottom right) (author's personal archive). See also appendix 9.

Ideologically Maidan represented all possible modern political ideologies, or at least their images within Ukrainian political cosmology. If anything, this is representative of the birth of civic society, of the variety of narratives and views, ideas and genuine political positions participating in the improvised *agora*, where in a liminal political unrest Ukraine was building its post-Soviet political *persona*.[338] However in a lot of Western media coverage, all these civil voices, dreams and aspirations were compressed into a narrow 'right-wing' image, mainly represented by the *Pravyi Sektor* bogeymen.[339]

A second way that the protests were perceived in the Western media was primarily based on the notion that the object of Maidan's dissatisfaction was the wish to join European

[338]An interesting comparison could be drawn with similar post-Soviet movements in Baltic States, the former GDR, Hungary, Czechoslavakia, etc.
[339]It is important to note that another large part of media ignored the obvious presence of radical nationalist element in Maidan as well.

Union.[340] Instead of emphasizing the local political contexts, explaining the post-Soviet political culture of corruption and political nihilism as well as other intricacies of the Ukrainian post-USSR condition, the Western media instantly started discussing the prospects of Ukraine's EU membership, framing the question in a larger geopolitical context and disregarding the very point of Maidan as a result.[341] The discussion concentrated on the self-centred narrative, inherent to the dominant transition theories, taking *a priori* the idea that the main aim of Ukrainian struggle is to become a part of the European political and economic sphere.[342]

This image, in broad accordance with the Cold War logic, was thus opposed to the image of 'USSR-Russia'. Thus the entire conception of the processes taking place in Ukraine was framed in this binary context and was therefore simplistic: 'pro-Western' protesters for EU membership were struggling against the 'pro-Eastern' president, who seeks closer ties to Russia.[343] From there, the Western public opinion itself split between Euro-files and Euro-critics, with several different 'sub-genres', some siding with the American Cold-War narrative, and the other siding with the Russian Cold-War narrative. Some were supporting the US narrative about the spread of Western values and others supporting the Russian narrative of US imperialism. Some were in favour of Ukraine's European political vector, others were Euro-sceptical.

The effect of this Western-centric binary perception of the situation spawned considerations about the split of Ukraine into two and consequentially gave birth to the doubts about Ukrainian State integrity, which from a Ukrainian perspective was reasonably

[340] Some political analysts expressed surprise regarding the EU's ability to 'start a riot'. See Ian Traynor, "Ukrainian protests show the European Union still offers hope to some",*The Guardian*, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/01/ukrainian-protests-european-union-hope, (Last accessed: September 30, 2014).

[341]See for instace: Joerg Forbrig, "Why Ukraine's future lies with the EU, not Russia", *CNN*,http://edition.cnn.com/2013/12/03/opinion/ukraine-protests-russia-forbrig/, (Last accessed: September 29,20 14); "EU stands by 'family member' Ukraine", *BBC*,http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-25467738, (Last accessed: Saptember 29, 2014); Charles Crawford, "Putin's Russia is too weak to stop Ukraine joining Europe. But it will try", *The Telegraph*,http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/charlescrawford/100248515/putins-russia-is-too-weak-to-stop-ukraine-joining-europe-but-it-will-try/, (Last accessed: September 29, 14); "Putin's Gambit:How the EU Lost Ukraine," *Spiegel Online*, http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/how-the-eu-lost-to-russia-in-negotiations-over-ukraine-trade-deal-a-935476.html, (Last accessed: September 29, 2014).

[342] It is important to note that there were voices (mostly Ukrainian) calling for a more subtle interpretation as well. (See: Volodymyr Ishchenko, "Ukraine Protests Are No Longer Just About Europe," *The Guardian*,http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/22/ukraine-protests-europe-far-right-violence, (Last accessed: September 29, 2014); Taras Ilkiv, "A Ukrainian Journalist Explains 10 Things The West Needs To Know About The Situation In Kiev", *Business Insider*, http://www.businessinsider.com/understanding-euromaidan-2014-1#ixzz3EiyZHOwt, (Last accessed: September 29, 2014).)

[343] The "map" of strategic positions that each Western state took is, of course much more complex. A clear explanation of the intricacies of various EU states' foreign policies can be found here: Anita Sobják; Roderick Parkes, 'Understanding EU Action during "Euromaidan:" Lessons for the Next Phase', *PISM Strategic Files*, Vol. 41 (2014), p. 1-11.

seen as a betrayal.[344] As a result, the debates in Western media on the topic of Ukraine became more representative of the Western political cosmology and political spectre itself rather than the actual political process within the country.

The two images that formed in the Western media merged the complexity of the situation into two main 'ideological' Western points of view, Maidan being either 'pro-European', or 'nationalist'. This way, the Western audiences themselves started identifying with one of these sides, either in support of the Maidan's 'pro-European' struggle, or against the 'right-wing *coup d'état*'. This way, once again, the format of images that the Western media constructed in explaining Maidan, became more representative of the Western own political cosmology than the Ukrainian one.

In framing the issue in this binary way, the public discussion created its own image of 'Euromaidan', which was representative of its own cosmological structure and provided a comfortable platform for the typical 'left vs. right', 'pro-Russian vs. pro-American', 'anti-nationalist vs. pro-democratic' discussions to evolve. What this framing of the 'Euromaidan' image did politically, however, was to provide the grounding for the Western perception of the situation Ukraine. It provided epistemological tools for all the political positions both in the US and the EU to discuss the ongoing crisis: discussing the prospects of 'Westernization' of Ukraine as well as criticising its 'right-wing' character.

Russian narrative: Euromaidan as a US-backed fascist movement

One year after the events in Kyiv discussed here having passed; one can probably easily say that next to Ukraine, the biggest political impact this crisis had on Russia. The aggressive (and defensive at the same time) foreign policy that the country pursues demonstrates its sensitivity to the topic. Surely, it is impossible to do justice to the topic of Russian post-Soviet political identity and political cosmology that gave rise to the rebirth of the neo-imperialist political trajectory we are witnessing today in but a few pages. However, it is worthwhile to take a closer look at the two images we are discussing from a Russian perspective, if only to demonstrate the point that the Ukrainian crisis, in which Russia plays a dramatic role, is not only a matter of economic struggle and geopolitics, but also a ground for the clash of different narratives, political identities and images, formatting both the Ukrainian and indeed Russian post-Soviet political identities.

[344] See: Brian Whitmore "Is It Time For Ukraine to Split?", *The Atlantic*, http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/02/is-it-time-for-ukraine-to-split-up/283967/, (Last accessed: September 29, 2014); Joshua Keating, "Divorce, Ukrainian Style", *Slate*, http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_world_/2014/02/27/divorce_ukrainian_style_would_ukraine_be_better_off_splitting.html,(Last accessed: September 29, 2014); Alastair Jamieson, "Can Ukraine Avoid an East-West Split and Bloody Civil War?," *NBC News*, http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/ukraine-crisis/can-ukraine-avoid-east-west-split-bloody-civil-war-n38911, (Last accessed: September 29, 2014).

Not surprisingly, from the very beginning of the events in Kyiv, the Euromaidan protests and their participants were widely covered in the Russian media, be it the internal one, or the one directed at the external audiences.[345] Television is the main source of information on the events in Ukraine (as of August 2014) for 88% of Russians, 73% of whom see the information as objective.[346] Therefore the issue of Russian state-supported media is particularly important in this context. Being used as an actual weapon; it was this tool that shaped the mass attitudes to Maidan not only in the country itself, but also in Ukraine, and, indeed, the West.[347]

Perhaps because it was so complex in its political agenda, Maidan was depicted by the pro-government media in various paradoxical and self-contradicting terms, from anarchists to fascist, to 'banderites', to vandals, etc.[348] Their political struggle was called a coup d'état, and clips compiled of actual and falsified material of violence were continuously shown on the news.[349] This is not difficult to understand, because despite his unsuccessful effort to flirt with the EU just before Maidan started, Viktor Yanukovich was widely known for his pro-Russian attitudes. The main image that eventually settled down in the Russian media, describing Maidan's protesters was that of 'fascists'. In our context it is important because it resonated throughout the entire layer of collective Soviet memory.

First of all, the Soviet propaganda used the term 'fascist' to label any opposing nationality-based movement. The term 'fascist junta' was constantly used by the Soviets, to label any government that opposes the regime. For example, the Prague Spring and Baltic struggles for independence in the early 1980-90s were also labelled as 'fascist'. In the world of Soviet propaganda, the Union was supposedly struggling against Western 'fascist and bourgeois forces' long after World War Two.[350] In the context of Ukrainian crisis, all of these factors, as well as the historical experience of actual fighting against Nazi Germany, but most importantly – the propaganda in Russian media gave the image of 'fascism' a very powerful secularized representation of 'true evil', against which the 'USSR-Russia'

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345 Tymothy Snyder, "Fascism, Russia and Ukraine," *The New York Review of Books*, http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2014/mar/20/fascism-russia-and-ukraine/, (Last accessed: January 29, 2015).

346 "О ситуации на Украине: Из каких источников россияне черпают информацию о ситуации на Украине? И верят ли этой информации? [On the Situation in Ukraine: What Sources do Russians Draw Information on the Situation in Ukraine From? And Do They Believe This Information?]," *FOM.ru*, http://fom.ru/Mir/11511, (Last accessed: February 29, 2015).

347 Sam Johnes, "Ukraine: Russia's New Art of War," *Financial Times*, http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/ea5e82fa-2e0c-11e4-b760-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3QE9TobZi, (Last accessed: January 29, 2015).

348 The title of 'Banderite' comes from the name of Stepan Bandera, a Ukrainian nationalist leader from the interwar period.

349 Ukrainian websites like StopFake.org, managed by volunteer journalists, are continuously countering the falsified disinformation by Russian media.

350 David Gress, *From Plato to Nato: The Idea of the West and its Opponents* (New York: The Free Press, 1998), 408-409.

image was then opposed.[351] This gave the Russian narrative a moral elevation of the political 'self' to justify otherwise unjustifiable foreign policy, which is in contradiction to multiple international laws and agreements, including the Budapest Memorandum.[352] Even more interestingly, the oppositional binary matrix 'fascists vs. us' rendered anyone who opposed Russia's policy into a fascist or a supporter of fascism.[353]

The second image that is very tightly connected to the first in the context of Russian political cosmology is that of 'the West'. According to Mikhail Shishkin, a famous Russian writer, who in this context could probably be called a 'Russian liberal', and not surprisingly, currently lives in Switzerland:

> Putin's television did everything to represent in its propaganda news the defender of Maidan as a fascist and also an anecdotal *khokhol* character: witty, greedy, stubborn, ready to sell his soul to the devil himself – to the West – only so that there was enough lard on his table […]
>
> It is an old custom to look at Ukrainians and Ukrainian language from above.
>
> The 'younger brother' was loved for his love of life, humor and self-irony. But he always remained the younger one in the family, which meant that he had to listen to the elder one, to learn from him, to try to be similar to him. And now, in the recent months, Russians saw Ukrainians completely different.
>
> The 'youngster' turned out to be much more mature than the elder one. Take an example as simple as the national anthem. They have an anthem that unites the generations, and we don't. During the [Sochi] Olympic Games, to the entire world we performed Stalin's anthem, uniting the dictator with generations of slaves.[354]

The image of the 'West' which Shishkin figuratively refers to as 'the devil' plays a particular role in the contemporary Russian political cosmology. Not only does it resonate the Cold War rhetoric, which the Western world is probably more conscious and fearful of than Russia. It also both put the imaginary 'self' in opposition to the image of 'the devil', and justified own aggressive stance as being defensive.[355]

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[351] Roland Oliphant, "Vigilante units to defend Crimea city against 'fascist' threat from Kiev," *The Telegraph*, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/10661617/Vigilante-units-to-defend-Crimea-city-against-fascist-threat-from-Kiev.html, (Last accessed January 29, 2015).

[352] "Crimea: A breach of international law," *Deutsche Welle*, http://www.dw.de/crimea-a-breach-of-international-law/a-17483425, (Last accessed: January 29, 2015).

[353] See for instance: "Поддержка фашистов может довести США до ядерной войны [Support for Fascism May Lead the US to Nuclear War]," *Politonline.ru*, http://www.politonline.ru/comments/16314.html, (Last accessed: January 29, 2015).

[354] "The democratic revolution in Ukraine started from the struggle with symbols – the *leninopad* swooped through the country's squares. And in our Russia, and the [largely] Russian [populated] areas of Ukraine the Lenins remained both in the squares and in the minds. Every nation is a hostage to its symbols.
In Russia, the city of Sankt Petersburg is still within the Leningrad district, and the super-modern train 'Sapsan' takes you to the city of Dzerzhinsky, which even nowadays still has the name of the country's supreme executioner. Such are the symbols that surround the people – such are their lives." (Source: "Rusų rašytojas Michailas Šiškinas: Ukrainietiška Rusijos ateitis [Russian Writer Michail Shishkin: The Ukrainian Future of Russia]," *15min.lt*, http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/pasaulis/rusu-rasytojas-michailas-siskinas-ukrainietiska-rusijos-ateitis-57-416706#ixzz3EsmnqT5G, (Last accessed: January 30, 2015).)

[355] 62% of surveyed Russians saw Russia's occupation of Crimea as justified by the "necessity to defend the local Russian population" from the "radical Ukrainian nationalists". ("Происходящее в Украине, Крыму и реакция России [Events in Ukraine, Crimea and the Reaction by Russia],"

As we have already seen, the existential condition in contemporary Russia, is profoundly liminal. Facts, fiction, aspirations, propaganda, and emotion, things that are said and those that actually *are*, intertwine in the local media to the point where it is no longer possible to distinct one from another.[356] It produces hysterical and angry experiential conditions of living, which paradoxically transform into a sense of profound self-righteousness. This is best expressed by the Georges' stripe mania in Russia and the eagerness with which the major part of Russian population is currently supporting the government and its violent foreign policy.[357] Similarly as in case of Lithuanian *sąjūdis*, although under different context of liminal conditions and political cosmology, the binary opposition between 'good' and 'evil', 'us' and 'the devil' once again becomes very clear and at the same time unrealistic.

The 'evil' here becomes identified with the image of 'the West'.[358] Indeed, from the very beginning of the protests in Kyiv, Russian government seemed to not be able to comprehend the simple fact that Maidan was a massive civil movement, motivated by idealist reasons. In mid-December, 2013, the Russian foreign minister described the movement as being initiated by "provocateurs with long-prepared script".[359] However this image of the Western 'evil' supporting the fascist Maidan, which, after ousting Yanukovich, supposedly started threatening the local Russian population (which is also a very difficult thing to define), which Russia thus had to defend, proved a particularly effective way of coercing power. It created a logical premise to glorify the 'self', embodied in the figure of Putin, the fighter with this 'evil', and that is what we observe nowadays both in Russia and Donbass.

Maidan has done damage to the imperial/Soviet self-image in Russian political cosmology, pushing it into yet another existential crisis. Through the post-Soviet struggle it questioned the status quo of Russia's own paradoxical image. The 'younger brother' was thus labelled as an enemy, and two archetypical 'enemy' images have been applied to the situation as an explanation: the 'fascist' archetype for the new Ukrainian government and the 'West'

Levada.ru,http://www.levada.ru/26-03-2014/proiskhodyashchee-v-ukraine-krymu-i-reaktsiya-rossii,(Last accessed: January 26, 2015).)

356 "Alan Yuhas, Russian propaganda over Crimea and the Ukraine: how does it work?," *The Guardian*, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/17/crimea-crisis-russia-propaganda-media, (Last accessed: January 30, 2015).

357Gabrielle Tétrault-Farber, "Striped Ribbon Becomes Essential Accessory for Pro-Kremlin Crowd," The Moscow Times, http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/striped-ribbon-becomes-essential-accessory-for-pro-kremlin-crowd/496762.html, (Last accessed: January 31, 2015).

358 Although, according to the survey conducted on the 24th-25th January 2015 only 3% of Russians claimed their belief that the West is actually involved in the conflict, which might show the diminishing effectiveness of Kremlin's propaganda. ("Poll: Only 3% of Russians Think West Is Meddling in Ukraine," *The Moscow Times*, http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/poll-only-3-of-russians-think-west-is-meddling-in-ukraine/515245.html, (Last accessed: February 1, 2015).)

359"Provocations, EU's financial interests behind Ukraine protests – Lavrov", *Russia Today*,http://rt.com/news/lavrov-ukraine-criticism-provocations-243/, (Last accessed: January 30, 2015).

image to explain the imaginary 'evil's' intentionality. The century-old Soviet formula of 'fascists being backed by the evil West' proved to be particularly powerful, as it also provided alternative mask-identity to the Russian 'self'. Through putting this mask-identity into practice and 'liberating the local (ethnic) Russians form the 'Western-backed fascists in Kiev', the Russian narrative both crated a sense of the 'nonsensical' (ambiguous, unusual) situation in its neighbouring country and provided a response that is logical in its own liminal and self-contradicting political cosmology. Paradoxically, this political move managed to merge the two (imperial and Soviet) elements of Russian narrative into one, the best symbolical manifestation of that being St. George's ribbon.

Ukrainian view – Maidan as a patriotic movement for fundamental change

The Ukrainian perception of the events that took place during the Autumn-Winter period of year 2013-14 in Kyiv and many other Ukrainian cities, at the time have received unreasonably little attention. This is partially so because only a small number of Westerners understand Russian and/or Ukrainian, which let a lot of Ukrainian narrative slide under the radar, and also because it took time for Maidan's activists to realize the importance of putting forth their narrative in English. The largest media sources therefore either perpetuated the Western, EU-centric perception of the Ukrainian struggle, or the Russian demonising narrative. The inquiry into the complexity of actual Ukrainian motivations and political cosmology has barely been made.

In February 2014, I conducted some fieldwork of my own in Kyiv, interviewing 10 protesters and taking pictures of the Maidan itself. The people I talked to varied in terms of gender (5 male, 5 female), occupation (ranging from an ex-convict, to medic, to piano teacher, to tourism agent, a biologist, an economist, etc.), ideological perspectives and regions of origins (3 respondents were from Eastern or Southern Ukraine). I will base the following arguments on my own findings and the visual material from the site as well as the scholarly and journalistic texts on the topic, which are now gradually appearing.[360]

The Maidan movement has been called various 'right-wing' - related titles. Indeed, next to the European flags and those of other countries, one could see plenty of national-themed flags, most significantly – the blue and yellow Ukrainian national flags and the black and red Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) flags. From the external point of view, this readily

[360]Jennifer Carroll, "This is Not about Europe: Reflections on Ukraine's EuroMaidan Revolution," *Perspectives on Europe* 44, no. 1 (2014), 8-15.; Onuch, *Who were the Protesters?*, 44-51; Anastasiya Ryabchuk, "Right Revolution? Hopes and Perils of the Euromaidan Protests in Ukraine," *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* 22, no. 1 (2014), 127-134.; Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, "Euromaidan: Time to Draw Conclusions," *European View* 13, no. 1 (2014), 11-20.; Joanna Szostek, "The Media Battles of Ukraine's EuroMaidan," *Digital Icons: Studies in Russian, Eurasian and Central European New Media* 11 (2014), 1-19.

translated into a narrative most notably perpetuated by the Russian media, according to which Maidan was led by the ultra-nationalist 'Banderites'.

However such view is very problematic, because first of all it would be difficult to say that Maidan was 'led' at all – it was a self-organized civic movement without clear leadership. Not even the opposition parties (UDAR, Svoboda and Motherland) had a concluding say in the movement. When Yanukovich signed an agreement with these parties on 21 February 2014, the public on Maidan (which had the support of approximately a half of Ukrainian population by 1 February) resisted the negotiation with the 'murderous' president and demanded his proper ousting.[361]

Secondly, ultra-nationalist organisations constituted but a minor part of the movement, next to other organisations, such as democrats, left-wing organisations, Kiev Orthodox church, and others.[362] One of the *Pravyi Sektor* leaders claimed in January 2014 that they did not count their members, but their Facebook page had around 20,000 subscribers. He also claimed, however, that they act as one of Maidan's *sotnia*'s ('hundreds' – a traditional Ukrainian military regiment title), where ordinary people, with no affiliation to the nationalist organisations also participated. After Yanukovich was removed from office, however, a large part of *Pravyi Sektor* non-radical members left the organisation.[363] In other words, this was a logistically, not ideologically – formed *sotnia*. This is in the context of many other *sotnia*'s and overall millions of protesters from all over Ukraine.

These flags as well as other national insignia, if they became a unifying factor for such a varied and diverse crowd, thus seem to have a different meaning than the narrow nationalist imaginary. All the Maidan participants I talked to univocally declared one thing: Maidan is against the *banda*, the 'kleptocratic' clique of oligarchs which was running the country since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In a mafia-like manner, it was being done through a combination of large-scale private capital and a completely corrupt bureaucratic apparatus. In fact, just as it often happens, it was easier for them as well as the entire Maidan's environment, filled with symbolism and rhetorical declarations, to clearly pronounce what this struggle was against rather than what it was for.

[361] "Ukrainians Split in Their Support for Maidan, One in Ten Backs Use of Force – Poll," *Interfax*, http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/press-conference/189203.html,(Last accessed: January 28, 2015).
[362] Surv*ey* by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation and the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology. ("Maidan-2013," *Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation*, (Last accessed: January 28, 2015), http://www.dif.org.ua/en/events/gvkrlgkaeths.htm).
[363] "Правый сектор. Кто они и чего добиваются [Pravyi Sektor. Who Are They and What Do They Strive For]," *Liga.net*, http://news.liga.net/interview/politics/962730-pravyy_sektor_kto_oni_i_chego_dobivayutsya.htm, (Last accessed: January 28, 2015).

Carricatures of the now ousted president in Maidan's territory. Yanukovich depicted as: A clown, with a slogan that says: "Towards Europe without Yanukovich!"(top left); Hitler behind bars (top right); Pilate washing his bloody hands while a soldier spears a crucified Ukrainian coat of arms. Note the quasi-religious self-representation (bottom left); A convict behind bars at a court with a sign 'Yanukovich – killer' (bottom right) (author's personal archive).

The 'for' arguments were as varied as was the crowd in Maidan. And in terms of the adversary, Yanukovich became the factual and symbolic embodiment of the image of 'evil'. This became particularly evident after Berkut's violent repressions against the Maidan protesters, starting with the beating of students on the night of 30th November 2013, after which around a million of Kyiv's inhabitants flooded the streets protesting. Murders and injuries amounted to hundreds by 20th February 2014. All of this spoke to the protesters of the 'evilness' of Russian-supported Yanukovich's regime. This on its turn called for the defence of the eclectic myriad of values that the Ukrainian and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army flags came to represent.

Looking from this perspective, we may notice significant similarities of Maidan to *sąjūdis* and the 'January events' in particular, where a large part of mostly well-educated upper social strata rose against the quasi-metaphysical image of the political 'evil' that resonated in all areas of their lives. Indeed, the religious element was particularly significant in the Maidan movement as well: from the iconostasis-like stage in the middle of Maidan, non-stop prayers spoken during the battle of 18to 19 February, to the field hospitals established in churches, to overall support of Kiev's Patriarchate to the protesters, the 'Heavenly

sotnia', and so on.[364] Just like in case of *sąjūdis*,it encouraged the self-perception of the protesters as fighters for general good, not only national interest or political/ethnic identity.[365]

Furthermore, since this also was a political, tangible, physical struggle, with people dying along the way, the national, the historical, and also-the European imaginary started representing existential categories. They symbolised the opposition to what became associated with 'evil' (the corrupt, cruel and humiliating existence: Soviet existence, experientially speaking) rather than nationalist, chauvinistic ideas. And that is why a slogan 'glory to Ukraine', a black and red nationalist flag, a romanticised picture of Taras Shevchenko managed to unite such a massive and diverse crowd: because they first of all meant other things. That is why this civic movement targeted the symbol of their previous condition – the Lenin's sculptures.

> Ukrainians started tearing down the symbols of our humiliating common past, and Russians in Ukraine, unfortunately, started defending them.
>
> […] Kiev's citizens went to streets to free themselves from the criminal bandit government. This outburst was not directed towards the revolution. It was not a path towards violence, but rather towards a civilized order, towards Europe.
>
> To Ukrainians Europe is not the real European Union with a load of its own problems, it is a myth about life according not to the criminal rules but to the laws of justice. Europe is a synonym to a hope of life in a civilized Ukraine.[366]

And this is where the image of "the West" can be discussed. Even though Maidan was often called a revolution by the participants themselves (what was meant by it is a different question), and even though one of ten respondents I interviewed actually argued in favour of a violent push for the ousting of Yanukovich on 17 February, just before it actually happened, the important message in this Shishkin's quote is the following. The image of Europe, and the 'Euro-' at the beginning of Euromaidan first of all meant an ethical moral, not a political stance, an urge for existential and political self-cleansing. Some protesters both whom I interviewed and those interviewed by others were talking about standing for

[364]Maidan was supported by the Kyiv Orthodox patriarchate, but not the Moscow's one. As one of the interviewers told me, when Berkut was chasing the protesters out of the Independence square on the night of 30th November to 1st December 2013, those who saught shelter were cast away by the priests of the St. Sophia church (Moscow's patriarchate), but were granted shelter by Andryivsky church (Kyiv's patriarchate) nearby. Also see appendix 9 and Chapter 6 for the religious element in Maidan.

[365] There is a website dedicated to the 'heavenly *sotnia*', as those who died in Maidan were called: http://nebesnasotnya.com.ua/en/.

[366] "Rusų rašytojas Michailas Šiškinas: Ukrainietiška Rusijos ateitis [Russian Writer Michail Shishkin: The Ukrainian Future of Russia]," *15min.lt*, http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/pasaulis/rusu-rasytojas-michailas-siskinas-ukrainietiska-rusijos-ateitis-57-416706#ixzz3EsmnqT5G (last accessed on 30 January 2015).

their rights.[367] However under more thorough enquiry, the term 'human dignity' emerged. "We want to live like humans, the European way", one respondent said.[368] Even though formally the protests started with a reaction to a political decision, the real meaning of Euromaidan was the struggle of the large part of the Ukrainian population against their own existential condition.

An alegorical representation of Ukraine's existential condition. A crossroad (note the liminal aspect) between the clean and orderly existence represented by Europe, and the dirty and decadent existence represented by the Russian flag and a sign "Elcome to Asia". (Author's personal archive)

To summarise: as my research and interviews suggest, in the Ukrainian political cosmology, the values expressed by nationalist symbolism signified an ethical rather than ethnical or ideological category, the moral 'self', associated with the dignified and proud political subject. And the 'European' image signified Maidan's *telos*, thedignified, 'Western', non-Soviet life – both existentially and economically. The topping of Lenin's figures, in this context meant an existential self-cleansing rather than a right-winged ideological declaration, and the 'Soviet' image signified the humiliating and oppressive living conditions which in terms of corruption hadn't changed much since the collapse of the Union. However, it has been also shown how other cosmologies interpret the same images in their own contexts, which is paradoxically more revealing about themselves rather than Maidan as such. The political crisis and absolute lack of successful communication between the sides that we are witnessing nowadays is the result of this clash of political cosmologies. The liminal condition that the violent clash evoked also gives rise to new mask-identities not only in terms of the emergence of the new organizations, such as *Pravyi Sektor* or what is called 'DNR' and 'LNR', but also to the re-configuration of political cosmologies themselves, where former 'brotherly nations' become enemies. At the core of these conflicts and transitions lay various images and

[367] David Stern, "What Europe Means to Ukraine's Protesters," *The Atlantic*, (Last accessed: January 30, 2015), http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/12/what-europe-means-to-ukraines-protesters/282327/.
[368] Respondent #1, interviewed by the author, February 16, 2014, Kyiv, Ukraine, Author's personal archive.

associative symbols, revealing themselves in various forms, depending on particular contextual narratives.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter explored a number of different yet closely connected topics. First of all, it was aimed at better articulation of some of the themes discussed in the dissertation, such as the crucial aspect of liminality and the experiential side of post-Soviet politics. The second aim was to demonstrate the applicability of the theory which is put forward here to various different cases within the post-USSR region and to show that phenomena like images, the binary opposition, the scarification of politics, etc. are applicable outside Lithuania. And finally, the chapter was to cover the themes that have not been discussed in the previous chapter, such as the political situation when an image is referred to and incorporated in several competing narratives.

From what has been discussed above, several conclusions can thus be drawn. The first section discussed several ways that liminal experiential condition can manifest. It covered the temporal, formal and spatial modalities of liminal experience. Firstly, it showed how time can liminally be experienced as 'stuck' or flexible, with cases where Soviet existence still remains a lived reality, and cases where this existence seized to be a convincing living experience even before the actual political Soviet Union dissolved. Formally, it demonstrated how political forms can also be liminal, and how to the human actor, his mask-identity may be a more convincing reality than the institutional reality. In case of Russia, despite it being a different institution than the USSR, in many cases the former is seen as the continuation of the latter, with all of its political implications. Finally, it discussed three forms of spatial liminality in the post-Soviet context. I argued that a liminal condition has manifested with space changing in three characteristic ways: through separation, unification or division. Uniting all these ways is the ex-static experience, in which new political forms and new mask-identities emerge.

The second section looked at three factually absolutely unrelated images of persons in three different cultural contexts. What unites these images is their symbolism and their importance for the political identities in their respective contexts. In the context of each narrative, the factual person – be it real of fictional behind the image have been pushed to the margin. The central emphasis in each case was put on their symbolism, transferring the ideas, ideals and political cosmology that constitute respective political identities. This also

means that same as in the case of Lithuania, the images of these personalities were very tightly connected to the political needs of the forming identities. Whether the need was for encouragement to strife for independence, to establish a national narrative and unity or to have a leader figure the nation could relate to, the images of these persons served that purpose.

The third section, tackled the issue of same images serving several different narratives. The case of Maidan in Ukraine was taken as an example, and two paramount images in the entire drama were analysed: the image of being 'right-winged' and the image of 'the West'. It appeared that the use of these images in the Western, Russian and Ukrainian cases differed and how they actually were more revealing of the three cosmologies than of the political issue at hand. These images were once again used for the political aspirations and needs of each narrative, while not being particularly informative of the 'threats' and 'aspirations' that the terms signify. Secondly, in all cases these images then either helped to establish a premise for intellectual articulation of the experienced and of the ongoing, or adapted it to the existent political cosmology.

Another overarching theme in this chapter and especially the last section was related to the phenomenon of Sovietism, or the 'Soviet condition'. It tackled the issue of experiential transition form the Soviet to the post-Soviet condition. I argued that the established 'Russia-USSR' image, the conception of the continuity between the Imperial and Federal Russia, and its modernist transformation – the USSR, is a reference point for understanding the experiential reality of the Soviet and the 'post-Soviet' condition. The demarcation line lies within the non-acceptance of the Soviet/Russian cosmology as part of own political identity. The opposition to this political cosmology, the claim of or strife for 'own' political *persona* not being a part of Sovietism is a step to post-Sovietism and the emergence of a post-Soviet political identity. In some Eastern and Central European cases this step was made before, during or after the collapse of the actual Soviet Union as a political institution, while in some cases it has not yet happened at all. A good indicator of the post-Soviet transition is the tearing down of Soviet leader's (especially – Lenin's) statues.

Finally, in short answer to the questions posed at the introduction to this chapter, the theory is indeed applicable beyond Lithuania, both in case of post-USSR and post-Warsaw Pact states in Central and Eastern Europe. The variation in the outcome of transition processes depends on the character of liminal experience that is invoked and the specificity of political cosmologies as well as clashes of contesting identity narratives or lack thereof.

These clashes produce re-articulation of identities and possible new political crises, as we may evidence in case of Ukraine.

CHAPTER 6. Post-Soviet "vices": violence, victimhood and cynicism

6.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapters, I have sought to show that the experiential aspect of post-Soviet politics is a significant factor both in terms of political identity formation within the region and in contemporary politics. The role of images, narratives, symbolism and other a-rational political elements become particularly influential under liminal conditions and often determine the shape of political events in moments of crisis. These also provide the context in which new mask-identities and political cosmologies emerge and acquire importance. However, such volatile conditions also imply various dangers, one of them being what Arpad Szakolczai calls "permanent liminality", when the condition of being "in between" becomes a permanent state.[369] Due to its revolutionary character, the Soviet Union could be titled a case of liminality turning permanent. Agnese Horvath discusses a particular type of political leaders who emerge under liminal conditions and who are comparable to mythological trickster figures in anthropological and ethnographic works.[370] Even though this dissertation will not analyse the role of particular politicians in the identity formation processes, Horvath's analysis uncovers the cynical nature of these liminal characters which is at the core of many post-Soviet political contexts. Bjørn Thomassen asks the following profoundly important questions:

> In ritual passages, liminality is followed by reintegration rituals that re-establish the order of the new personality as a part of the social order that he or she re-enters with a new role, stamped by the formative experience. This is a critical passage, but without reintegration liminality is pure danger. Hence, relating to crisis periods of larger societies where the social drama has no foregone conclusion, the question becomes: how is the liminal period dealt with, and how (if at all) is it ended? The question can again be posed in Weberian terms: how and when does a "routinization" or an "everydayinization" of the out-of-ordinary situations take place? And who will become the "carriers" of the new world-view that is eventually institutionalized?[371]

In relation to these problems, this chapter will seek to address three dangers in the post-Soviet context by tackling three interrelated questions: how can we anthropologically explain the occurrences of political violence in the region and what is their relation to identity? What are the experiential premises for the resurgence of various 'right-wing' ideologies in many post-Soviet countries and how are they related to victimhood? Finally,

[369]Szakolczai, *Liminality and Experience: Structuring Transitory Situations and Transformative Events*, 141-172

[370]Agnese Horvath, "Tricking into the Position of the Outcast: A Case Study in the Emergence and Effects of Communist Power," *Political Psychology* 19, no. 2 (2002), 331-347.

[371]Thomassen, *Uses and Meanings of Liminality*, 5-27

how can we explain the dissonance between the political form and practice in many post-Soviet states' political culture, and how is it related to political cynicism? Because of the limited scope of this dissertation, It will not be possible to discuss these issues in all their depth and complexity. Instead, this chapter serves first of all to demonstrate the fruitfulness of the theoretical approach developed in chapter one for explaining post-Soviet reality. Secondly, it focuses on the specificity of post-Soviet political culture and cosmology. Finally, it is intended to assess the true influence at the human existential level of the Soviet experience and relate this experience to practical contemporary politics.

In effort to address these issues, the first section of this chapter will examine the theme of scapegoating and sacrifice in liminal politics, using Rene Girard's as well as Henri Hubert's and Marcel Mauss's work on the phenomenon of violence and its social and political implications. It will also analyse the cultural, anthropological and political significance of sacrifice and of the sacred, arguing that a lot of political violence taking place within the Soviet and post-Soviet region can be understood through understanding their violent, 'sacrificial' mechanisms at the historical, intellectual and experiential levels.

The second section will argue that because of the powerful experiences and the specificity of liminal crisis as an existential condition, newly-formed political mask-identities tend to possess a quasi-sacred character. Here the term 'quasi-metaphysics' will be used, as coined by Tomas Sodeika and Arūnas Sverdiolas in their 1989 article, written during the former Soviet regime. Several examples will be discussed how violence and the sense of victimhood affect societies and their emerging political mask-identities, infusing them with quasi-sacred elements. The establishment of such mask-identities is important for finding existential reference points under fluid conditions, but if over-intensified, they can also tend to deviate towards chauvinistic character. Another danger with such political identities is that because of the nature of the Soviet experience, they are most of the times centred on the sense of victimhood and suffering, in a way rendering the emancipation from this condition a betrayal of the sacred.

The third sectionwill continue to draw on the work of Arūnas Sverdiolas to discuss the phenomenon of post-Soviet political cynicism. It will be demonstrated how Soviet Marxism inherent affects the political culture, producing the schismatic perception of political reality. Further developing the theme of quasi-metaphysics in post-Soviet politics, I will discuss the process that Sverdiolas calls de-sublimation of the metaphysical. It will be argued that this phenomenon is deeply rooted in post-Soviet political culture because of its modernist and Marxist origins and character.

6.2 Violence

Soviet history is a fertile soil for identity-related issues, as it is thoroughly marked by an ongoing culture of cruelty, violence and terror. It has been broadly documented, and numerous series of books and articles written as well as films made on the topic.[372] Some of the most salient examples include the Russian Revolution, the social cleansing of the economic, cultural, intellectual and political elites, multiple genocides, collaboration with Nazis during the World War Two, to labour camps and the Soviet jail system, spawning the influential criminal strata, the *Holodomor*, Stalinist repressions, forced exiles, KGB interrogations, the repression of dissidents in the post-Stalinist era, the events in Budapest, Prague and Vilnius. Recent events of violence that are strongly related to Soviet images and political cosmologies are the Chechen, Balkan, Georgian and Ukrainian Wars, as well as the riots in Tallinn, Estonia, in 2007, among very many others.[373] Thus the element of violence, victimisation and scapegoating in relation to the Soviet context has been intrinsic to the entire culture in the region for almost a century. Apart from some instances of Stockholm syndrome – resembling Soviet nostalgia, the Soviet Union overall has been a deeply traumatising experience of permanent liminality.

The fact that the USSR collapsed, and that it was to a large part due to dissident movements and various forms of political resistance all over the Union, however, demonstrates that the totalitarian state has not managed to completely crush the human integrity within the local population. However it did have and still has serious consequences. As a continuation of imperial and Soviet ambitions, the Russian aggression towards its neighbouring states, which I discussed in the previous chapter, has become a normative foreign policy, defended and propagated at highest levels of the Russian government.[374] We can also observe the resurgence of paramilitary and quasi-fascist political groups, to varying extents, in most of the post-USSR countries, despite the

[372] See for instance,Stéphane Courtois, ed., *Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

[373] Even though in our case it is not as important, there were also more subtle and less direct forms of violence. Among these are the communist ideologisation of everyday life, the psychological terror, intellectual censorship and brainwashing, cultural deprivation and the destruction or crippling of pre-Soviet political cosmologies and forms of life in all member states through disastrous modernist projects of industrialization, collectivization and secularization. Not to talk about the export of the Communist ideology and system outside the Union. At the very core to the Communist ideology are the principles of violent struggle, destruction and economic, social and political 'bulldozing' in exchange for the impossible promise of life in the nihilistic state of undifferentiated existential equality (equated with economic equality).

[374] In his speech about the occupied Crimea on 18 March 2014 Putin officially condoned the military occupation of the peninsula, hiding the fact behind what he called 'a referendum', which was not acknowledged internationally. See "Full Text of Putin's Speech on Crimea," *Prague Post*, http://praguepost.com/eu-news/37854-full-text-of-putin-s-speech-on-crimea (Last accessed: 24 February 2015).

growing integration within the liberal European zone, as the next section will explore.[375] Most significantly, the perpetuation of culture of violence has remained present in the post-Soviet ethnic, religious and frozen territorial conflicts in various parts of the region. In search for the anthropological explanation for these instances, we will take a look at the logics of *scapegoating*, *sacrifice* and *violence*, as suggested by Rene Girard, Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss and see how interrelated these social phenomena are.

In their book, Hubert and Mauss observe sacrifice as a ritual, revealing the cultural meanings within the violent practice of tribal societies and also discussing their phenomenology. Partially building on their work, but also moving further, Girard puts forward a critical explanation for violence and scapegoating as a founding social process for the emergence of culture in general. For Girard this process is not necessarily a religious practice and it underpins not only tribal but also modern societies. The sacrificial mechanism has its function and purpose under particular social circumstances, and serves particular functional purposes. Underlying all these phenomena, however, are what Girard calls sacrificial mechanisms, which transcend the tribal rituals of sacrifice and instead point to a very profound layer of humanity as well as the contagious character of violence itself via what he calls *mimetic desire*.[376]

However, neither Girard, nor Hubert and Mauss analyse the post-Soviet space, nor actually any particular political case. Even though revealing the logics and meanings of sacrificial rituals, Hubert and Mauss discuss traditional, tribal societies with overall stiff social and cultural structures, unlike those of modern ones. Girard does discuss the cultural fabric in modern societies, yet his work concentrates on constructing a theory primarily basing it on sources in literature, not actual political cases. This dissertation applies these theories to the post-Soviet cases, however, demonstrating their validity and deriving possible solutions for the problems uncovered by such theoretical inquiry. It also expands some aspects in these theories, elaborating on the human experience of liminality (Girard describes it in Weberian terms as crisis) and its importance to political identity formation. Using these theories, however, I will discuss the circumstances needed for the sacrificial mechanisms to emerge, the character of a subject, which these violent acts are directed to, and the anthropological reasons for these acts to take place.

[375] "The far right in central Europe differs from its western equivalents in its choice of enemies. In the west it thrives on immigrant-bashing. In the east it dwells on more atavistic grievances, such as ethnic minorities, old territorial disputes, homosexuals, international financiers and, naturally, Jews. Hatred of the Roma has become a defining issue." See 'The Far Right in Eastern Europe', *The Economist*, (November 12, 2009) http://www.economist.com/node/14859369 (Last accessed: 25 February 2015),

[376] Rene Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World* (Edinburgh: A&C Black, 2003), 283-299.

Liminal crisis and Communism

In tribal societies, rituals of sacrifice take place under certain circumstances. There has to be a need for them. First of all, the ritual of sacrifice follows the general loss of order in the society. This is due to the loss of limitations dividing different social units and entities – a liminal condition. It results in merging and intermingling of social roles and identities along with responsibilities, distinctions and taboos that separate them: "The strongest impression is without question an extreme loss of social order evidenced by the disappearance of the rules and "differences" that define cultural divisions".[377] Plagues, natural catastrophes, wars, revolutions and similar events can be taken as exemplar sources for such unnatural, crisis-like states in the society. Critical situations, which result in common discomfort and loss of reference points, lead to the dissolution of social structure and the formation of what Girard calls a mob. Eventually, this mob becomes a driving power in the society: "[s]uch spontaneous gatherings of people can exert a decisive influence on institutions that have been so weakened, and even replace them entirely."[378]

The creation of Soviet society was the creation of a massive scale mob – of the socialist *narod*. In many places, especially the Asian part of the Union (since in the Western part they were already on the way), the Sovietisation introduced a crude version of modernising processes, imitating social and political 'progress', but paradoxically leading to degeneration in all spheres of life. On one hand it created new jobs, yet they were paid for in useless currency, because of the constant deficit of goods to buy, not to mention forms of modern slavery in working camps.[379] Soviet created new collective housing – mostly either building crude massively built low quality barracks and block houses or via nationalising private properties, exiling the owners into gulags and dividing the space to accommodate several tightly stuffed families into one household.[380] Soviet education was established, yet it was done brutally and was strictly controlled, censored and shaped for indoctrination purposes.[381] It introduced a healthcare system, yet the doctors had to be bribed to provide healing, which was also of low quality.[382]Every part of life in Soviet Union reverberated its foundational liminal, surreal ambiguity where form did not correspond to reality.

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[377]Girard, *The Scapegoat*, 12.
[378]*Ibid*.
[379] And thus a "*blat*" economic system emerged where theft and corruption became normalized and appropriated at all social levels and conveyed to post-Soviet political culture as well. See Alena Lebedeva, *Russia's Economy of Favours: Blat, Networking and Informal Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Predss, 1998).
[380]Patrick Troy, "Housing Policy in the Soviet Union," *Urban Policy and Research* 8, no. 1 (1990), 12-17.
[381]Rafał Godoń, Palmira Jucevičienė and Zdenko Kodelja, "Philosophy of Education in Post-Soviet Societies of Eastern Europe: Poland, Lithuania and Slovenia," *Comparative Education* 40, no. 4 (2004), 562-565.
[382]Diane Rowland and Alexandre Telyukov, "Soviet Healthcare from Two Perspectives," *Health Affairs* 10, no. 3 (1991), 71-86.

At the same time, traditional local differentiations – be it cultural, material, economical, or political were being purposefully levelled and defaced wherever the Soviets went. Instead a standardized folksy *narodnaya* culture was 'issued', which would not pose political threats to the totalitarian establishment and would fit the general communist narrative.[383] Formally, this faceless, newly-created mob was supposed to govern itself, via *soviets,*boards of 'human granules' within the unarticulated mass of Soviet *narod*. Clearly the reality of such a project could never take place successfully. And, because of various factors – starting with the unthinkable amount of "human granules" involved, and ending with the simple impossibility of a normal life under formless conditions, both functionally and existentially - it never did. A new hierarchy naturally took shape within the mob. Unsurprisingly, it was centred on the *soviets* and stiffly hierarchized towards a narrow circle of the dictator and the nomenclature. Therefore paradoxically and contrary to the theoretical intention, dozens of multi-faceted, multi-polar, unique and self-sustaining cultures, polities and political *personae* were brutally destroyed, reduced to a limitless and formless mass, only to then be re-shaped, in an almost alchemic manner, into a stiff totalitarian structure.

If this was merely a power transition from democracy (in terms of destroyed hierarchy) to despotism in a limited and relatively small Greek polis, as Plato would have seen it, we could discuss this no further, if only to express pity upon the people involved. The revolutionary teleology of the Communist narrative, however, rendered the liminal condition of transition permanent within this despotism.[384] It institutionalized a state of forced transition, a never-ending journey towards a sacred state of Communism, which positioned the Soviet *narod* in a condition of permanent liminality.[385]

However, a volatile chaos does not necessarily have to reign during liminal conditions. Liminality is an experience of loss of meaning, loss of form, a nihilistic state. Under Stalin, for instance, liminality expressed itself actively: through grotesque and surreal totalitarian terror, deified dictatorship, multiple genocides and politically sacrificial mass murders (for instance, the construction of the White Sea Channel where tens of thousands of gulag prisoners died building a water channel that would connect the Baltic and White Seas for cargo transportation). Under Brezhnev, however, it expressed itself passively: through total grey, meaningless boredom in everyday life, through absolute emptiness of political

[383]Natalya Sadomskaya and Tamara Dragadze, "Soviet Anthropology and Contemporary Rituals," *Cahiers Du Monde Russe Et Soviétique* 31, no. 2/3 (1990), 245-255.
[384]The final section of this chapter will examine some of the origins of the paradoxical and schismatic nature of Sovietism.
[385]Árpád Szakolczai, "In a Permanent State of Transition: Theorising the East European Condition," *Limen* 1 (2001).

rituals, pervasive existential meaninglessness and overall stagnation.[386] Therefore for a vast population, the formation of the Soviet Union, due to the absurdity of its core principles, created abnormal, liminal permanent living conditions, which eventually became taken for granted. And this gave ground for the formation of a political culture, where violence, victimhood and sacrificial mechanisms were at the very core of the political.

After the Union collapsed, and with new political conditions emerging, the liminal experiential conditions of Soviet life gradually and to different extents diminished and changed in many places. In others, however, as discussed in the previous chapter, they still endure. Either way, the experience of 'normalized' permanent liminality has influenced the post-Soviet political culture in many ways. The only forms of meaningful political practice in the Soviet Union, which normally would be anti-political, were (collaboration with) violent struggle and persecution, being oppressed (and possibly being a dissident) or unmasking the oppressor (disillusioned and political resignation).[387] The collapse of the Soviet Union has been yet another crisis that has touched upon the entire Soviet world and induced various eruptions of violence under various contexts, from *January events*, to Balkan Wars, to Chechen Wars, the situation in Ukraine, discussed previously, etc. In order to grasp the human principle behind these events, we need to understand the anthropological implications of an act of violence as an experience, as well as the reasons behind it.

Scapegoat

Another element of the sacrificial mechanisms that are in play in the post-Soviet context is scapegoating. During times of crisis, a society begins to search for a scapegoat to be blamed for the situation. The accusation they make is that an impurity or a crime of the scapegoat is actually to be blamed for the occurrence of the crisis. In the context of the Soviet Union, the scapegoats varied from bourgeois capitalists to fascists to the 'evil' West to Jewish conspiracies and to the USA. In the more recent context, this could have been the 'nationalism' of *Sąjūdis* in Lithuania, the 'Muslim-ness' of the Kosovars, the 'fascism' of Maidan in Kyiv, etc. The most important characteristic of a scapegoat is its innocence and symbolic 'otherness'. Such accusations have a mythical character and mark the change of common reasoning from limit-oriented rationality to limitless mystification. As Girard writes,

[386]See appendix 3. Nowadays liminality can be experienced through neo-liberal nihilism and consumer culture which essentially creates the conditions of living within the void of meaning as well.
[387] Hence the three main negative forms of political action in the post-Soviet political culture: violence, victimization and cynicism.

> The persecutors' portrayal of the situation is irrational. It inverts the relationship between the global situation and the individual transgression. If there is a causal or motivational link between the two levels, it can only move from collective to the individual. The persecutor's mentality moves in the reverse direction. Instead of seeing in the microcosm a reflection or imitation of the global level, it seeks in the individual the origin and cause of all that is harmful.[388]

This way, a dishonest Jewish merchant becomes an image of 'Jewish trickery'; a corrupt politician becomes an image of 'government's corruptness'; a group of neo-Nazi participants in Maidan become an image of 'Maidan's fascism', etc. The lack of limits and forms disorientates and in some way deceives the society. In the words of Girard, "[t]he perspective is inevitably deceptive since the persecutors are convinced that their violence is justified; they consider themselves judges, and therefore they must have guilty victim".[389] This allows society to look for a 'proper scapegoat' and also suggests that a scapegoat does not necessarily have actually committed the crimes.

This coincides with the general chaotic atmosphere and loss of limits in the society mentioned above. In a tribal context, sacrifice is used as a means of purification either of a person or society itself. The victim can either be an actual scapegoat person(s) that is/are accused (according to Girard) or it can be some substitute, a scapegoat for a scapegoat (as Hubert and Mauss suggest). In case of the Maidan, for instance, during the night of 18 February 2014, a Berkut officer was captured by the protesters. He was beaten and fell unconscious, even though it is not clear as to what his personal crimes were. He was a Berkut officer, he represented Berkut, Berkut represented the government, which represented the image of the corrupt, oppresive 'evil' that Maidan was struggling against.

Either way, the victim is intentionally to be sacrificed in the ritual of purification and stabilization, hence the use of 'holy violence'. The 'evil' and the 'impurity' within the scapegoat have to be cleansed. However in a modern context, where rituals are intellectually disconnected from metaphysics and emerge only as un-reflected praxis, especially under the dominance of revolutionary logics, the purification does not succeed. Requiring new victims, the sacrificial mechanism continues reproducing itself until like Saturn, it "starts devouring its own children". Thus the bourgeois and the royal are sacrificed to cleanse the misery of the deprived until everyone is deprived; the Kosovars are sacrificed for the betterment of Serbia until it becomes a genocide; a statue of Lenin is being sacrificed as a scapegoat for cleansing the Ukrainian society of the miserable Soviet condition, until Ukraine's own people start dying.

[388] Girard, *The Scapegoat*, 20-21.
[389] *Ibid*., 6.

Girard describes four stereotypes on the basis of which a scapegoat is chosen. If a potential victim has at least some of these qualities, it may be scapegoated.[390] The main feature of the scapegoat is its marginality and 'otherness'. These features are perceived in the stereotypes mentioned before. The first stereotype is cultural and religious 'otherness', which is why ethnic or religious minorities often become the target for persecution in the society. As Girard remarks, "[i]n this we see one of the criteria by which victims are selected, which, though relative to the individual society, is transcultural in principle".[391] It is the status of minority that bears a notion of both being 'inside' and 'outside' that makes it marginal. Various ethnically-based post-Soviet conflicts can be explained by this kind of stereotyping. For instance, the most marginal of all minorities in the region are traditionally the Roma and Jewish. And it is these minorities that are being increasingly blamed for various reasons, from crime to economic difficulties. Whether the accusations are true or wrong is not the most important question here. What is the most interesting is that a "2011 survey finds many Hungarians share anti-Roma sentiments with 60 percent believing that criminality was in "gypsy" blood".[392] Therefore the mythologizing effect that Girard is talking about when talking about scapegoating is particularly evident here.

Another feature or stereotype that determines a scapegoat is physical 'otherness'. Girard puts this as follows: "[s]ickness, madness, genetic deformities, accidental injuries, and even disabilities in general tend to polarize persecutors. […] The "handicapped" are subject to discriminatory measures that make them victims, out of all proportion to the extent to which their presence disturbs the ease of social exchange".[393] Race, gender and sexual orientation may also be added to this category when talking about the modern context. The marginality of physical difference is obvious: it separates the individual from 'normal' people. Still, however, it does not deny the human nature, making a scapegoat once again marginal, yet not alien. There have been many occasions of attacks against homosexuals in most post-Soviet states.[394] These instances, however, bear political significance, not only legal importance or moral meaning. A statue of a rainbow, a scapegoat for a scapegoat (a symbol for homosexuality in many Eastern European countries) is being sacrificed to purify Poland in an independence march of 2013 in

[390] *Ibid*., 14.
[391] *Ibid*., 17-18.
[392] Sasa Woodruf, "Increased Hostility Against Jews and Roma in Hungary," *NPR*, http://www.npr.org/blogs/codeswitch/2014/03/09/287342069/increased-hostility-against-jews-and-roma-in-hungary (Last accessed: 2 March 2015),
[393] Girard, *Scapegoat*, 18.
[394] With the most significant instances continuing to take place in Russia, there were occasions in Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, Croatia, Serbia, mostly during gay pride events, when homosexuals were either physically or verbally attacked.

Warsaw.[395] However, the rainbow and homosexuality are also associated with Europeanness, liberal values and European Union-cantered power structure, all of which are unfavourable to different elements of post-USSR societies.

A sculpture titled *Raduga* (A Rainbow)by Aleksandr Aleksyev in Kyiv, Ukraine, which represents Eurocriticism, combining images related to homosexuality (rainbow) and Europeanness (an imitation of Manneken Pis), presenting them in a way that is humiliating to the viewer, who is conditioned into passing under the "rainbow". (Source: Personal archive.)

The third marginality is social. A paradox here is that extreme riches are as marginal as total poverty. This is due to the fact that in times of crisis the fading of limits encompasses spiritual, ethical, personal and other planes, including social. In the words of Girard, "[i]n normal times the rich and powerful enjoy all sorts of protection and privileges which the disinherited lack. […] The rich and powerful exert an influence over society, which justifies the act of violence to which they are subjected in times of crisis. This is the holy revolt of the oppressed".[396] It is this kind of irrational marginalization of the rich and powerful that could be observed during the Russian Revolution in 1917, but also even nowadays, for instance in case of the rioting mobs in London. The important aspect here is that the scapegoating is based more than just on economic basis. It is metaphysical: it is the disinherited mob's *right* to demand what is not theirs, based on the fact that they are suffering.

The question that remains is why such marginal persons would be chosen as scapegoats. One reason is obvious: it is their 'otherness' that makes them suspicious for the society and thus more likely to be accused. Another reason is that it represents the ambiguity, unclear condition, the unknown, which is always a frightening thing to encounter, especially during the crisis. One thing has to be strongly emphasized here. Unlike in the ritualistic tribal setting, in modern times the process of scapegoating and sacrificing, is very largely

[395] "Burning the Rainbow," *The Economist* (November 18, 2013), http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2013/11/Poland (Last accessed on 2 March 2015).
[396] Girard, *Scapegoat*, 18-19.

non-reflected, unconscious and yet profoundly prominent. However, Girard offers yet another answer: "Difference that exists outside the system is terrifying because it reveals the truth of the system, its relativity, its fragility, and its mortality."[397] Therefore the sacrifier and the scapegoat are connected. What we need to understand now, however, is why the sacrifice of the scapegoat takes place at all, and why the sacrifier is inclined to performing it.

Process of sacrifice - purification

According to Huber and Mauss, "[s]acrifice is a religious act which, through the consecration of a victim, modifies the condition of the moral person who accomplishes it or that certain objects which he is concerned".[398] Through projecting one's own weakness and mortality on the scapegoat and then destroying it, the sacrifier symbolically purifies itself, thus restoring the structure of things, the limits and existential meaning that was lost due to the overwhelming sense of instability. It relieves or rather is intended to relieve the intense feeling of discomfort. Therefore it is not the object that is sacrificed that matters but the meaning and social situation in which the sacrifice is performed.[399] And the Soviet social existence, as discussed earlier, is a truly miserable one.

The scapegoat is a mediator between the political, the realm of lived reality of the sacrifier, and the liminal, the transcendental, the godly, i.e. the space, from which the miraculous, sacred change to the sacrifier's condition can emerge. Scapegoating the victim and destroying it means provoking the sacred, forcefully initiating the miraculous act of purification. The previous chapter discussed the role of political images and the situation when several narratives use the same image for their own purposes. This chapter emphasizes the argument that the image that is projected towards the scapegoat (in case of Ukraine – the Maidan), is much more representative of the self-image of the one that projects it than of the actual victim. Thus the projection of one's own negativity on the other allows for a possibility to destroy it. [400]

Although in our case sacrifice is political, and takes place in the secular world, the meaningful part of it is projected into the metaphysical. For Huber and Mauss, "[s]acrifice is a religious act that can only be carried out in a religious atmosphere and by means of essentially religious agents. But, in general, before the ceremony neither sacrifier nor

[397] *Ibid*. 21
[398] Hubert and Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function*, 13.
[399] *Ibid*., 109.
[400] Therefore Russia's political opposition to Maidan could be understood as it's scapegoating in order to purify the feeling of humiliation when Ukraine chose to try and end it's Soviet existence which tied it to Russia more than just economically.

sacrificer, nor place, instruments or victim, possess this characteristic to a suitable degree."[401] The scapegoat is being 'prepared' for the sacrifice by being put in a radical, marginal state. This state is judging and condemning it. In social context the marginality reveals itself when "the authorities swell the crowd with their number and are absorbed by them. In understanding the Passion we come to understanding the temporary removal of any difference not only between the Caiaphas and Pilate, or Judas and Peter, but between those who cry out or allow others to cry out: "Crucify him!"".[402] When shouting "Crucify him!", however, the crowd at the same time shouts "Sacrifice him!" The marginal state that the scapegoat is put in through this action lifts it to another plane, the one that Hubert and Mauss recognize as the 'world of gods'. The next section discusses the merging of the sacred with the political and the problem of quasi-metaphysics.

To sum up the main argument so far: during the ritual of the sacrifice, three words are essential: marginality, representation and purification. Marginality refers to the state of crisis and to the situation in which the scapegoat is put. His state during the ritual is that of 'between sacred and profane'. This can only occur when the demarcation between the two is lost. The scapegoat begins to represent the sacrifier. And then the purification can occur. Normally the ritual of sacrifice is designed to restore the limits and order. However in modern context the violence perpetuates and the sense of existential discomfort persists, also spawning various forms of victimhood-based identities as a result.

6.3 Victimhood

A particularly significant element that both *sąjūdis* and Maidan, among other post-Soviet independence movements, have in common is the metaphysical or religious character that they were charged with. Chapter four covered this topic in some detail when discussing the direct and indirect religious influences in the Lithuanian case. In the case of Maidan, the importance of the Kyiv Orthodox Church and other symbolism was also extremely prominent. Priests were often present on the stage in the middle of the square. The entire Maidan's territory, just like in case of Lithuania during the January events, was filled with symbolic declarations, images, representing 'evil' and the 'good', slogans with religious references and caricatures, revealing the deeply symbolic nature of the struggle. The stage itself was garnished in a way that resembled a half religious, half political iconostasis in the Orthodox Church. There were constant masses taking place on Maidan's Square of

[401] *Ibid*., 19-20.
[402] Girard, *Scapegoat*, 115.

Independence on Sundays. And during the bloody events of 18 to 19 February 2014, the prayers told from the stage would not stop until the morning.[403]

'Political iconostasis' on Maidan's stage. Compare this to fomrs of political religiousness in case of *sąjūdis*. See appendices 8 and 9. (Souce: Personal archyve)

So how does this reality relate to political identity formation? We have already discussed extensively throughout the dissertation the existential and political importance of such critical events to people participating in them. I argued that particularly because these experiences touch upon the participants at the most fundamental level, putting their actual existence in danger, they inevitably raise metaphysical questions. Religion in the cases of *sąjūdis* and Maidan offered hope and support politically and existentially. Yet at the same time, the political merged with the metaphysical in a very tangible way. The struggle against the Soviet or Yanukovich's regimes was also a struggle for the most profound human principles and images of dignified life, freedom, justice and 'good' in general.

However, not all forms of merging the metaphysical with the political produce positive results. Both Nazi and Communist regimes manipulated various quasi-religious formulations for their propaganda as well as incorporated metaphysical imperatives into their doctrines.[404] There is no question that the articulation of political 'self' in metaphysical terms may bear very sinister results. In order to understand this process, I will look at the process of victimhood-based political identity formation. I will first use the concept of quasi-metaphysics, which will help us with understanding the damaging historical and cultural influence of Soviet experience and Marxist ideology to political cosmology. Then I will refer back to questions of violence and sacrifice, discussing an instance of self-sacrifice, with possible dangers it can bring. Finally, I will elaborate on the process of identity formation under violent conditions and the process of self-victimization.

[403] *Maidan, directed by Sergey Loznitsa (Hague: Atoms and Void, 2014)*
[404] See appendix 2 for Soviet examples.

Quasi-metaphysics

Tomas Sodeika and Arūnas Sverdiolas offered an insider explanation for the ongoing events in 1989, which can also shed light on the more recent Maidan's events as well as point towards the possible negative side of the process. The authors introduced a concept of *quasi-metaphysics*. In their article, they demonstrate the influence of Marxism-Leninism on Lithuanian 'mentality':

> …when we start an archeological research of our mentality, first of all we encounter the layer of the Soviet period. [...] One of the most important factors that have been forming the consciousness of our post-totalitarian society, Marxism-Leninism, had affected it in two ways: as a national monopoly doctrine and, what is most important, as the constitutive principle of the whole society.[405]

According to the authors, this influence unfolds once we begin analysing social life and social relationships. These relationships happen at two levels. The authors describe the first level as 'social physics'. This level of human interests is related to materialist interests such as food, clothing, health insurance, etc. A second level, according to the authors, is 'social metaphysics':

> [...] nearly every human action is directed towards some aim, which is directly or indirectly related to an ideal or value-orientation of some sort. This is where another level of social life emerges, which exceeds the borders of society's material, physical existence.[406]

The authors argue that "social life happens at two levels simultaneously: at the level of social physics, which is predetermined by interest-related causal relations, and at the teleologically-ordered level of social metaphysics, which is predetermined by value orientations".[407] However, Marxist materialism denies the level of 'social metaphysics':

> The Marxist historical thought understood "idealist" explanations of social development and existence as ideologies, which, whether on purpose or not, naively or cynically present a distorted picture of social reality […] if one speaks about some socially valuable thought, theory or idea, it instantaneously begins searching for hidden interests, it starts to inquire: "whom will this benefit?".[408]

Therefore, the dictatorship of Marxist materialism in Soviet Union reduced the "metaphysical" level of ideas and principles and turned it into what the authors call "quasi-metaphysical" level of interests.[409] The authors describe explicitly the results of this kind of thinking, which unfolded in the contemporary Lithuanian social reality:

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[405]Sodeika and Sverdiolas, *Gyvenimas Kolboje Ir Tuoj Po To*, 494-499
[406]*Ibid*.
[407]*Ibid*.
[408]*Ibid*., 494-495.
[409]*Ibid*., 496.

> Reductive thinking dictates value confusion: no attention is any more paid to their hierarchy; the higher one is subjugated to achieving the lower one. This way, the good, the beautiful and the true become tools, which are used in order to protect the society from the asocial behavior. The ideal of priestly self-denial and serving the other becomes a tool, which helps solving problems related to citizen's medical support; peasant's attachment to his land – a tool to provide food products for the population; spiritual sense of nature – a tool of solving ecological problems; motherly feelings – a tool of assuring a positive demographic condition. National feelings are applied to when asking not to litter and not to cut trolleybus seats. A goal of spiritual revival is being raised instrumentally. Human consciousness is to be filled with values and ideals in the same fashion as one fills shop shelves with goods. A person has to become spiritual in the same fashion, as products have to be of high quality.
>
> Finally, this destructive heritage of social thought – this empty spot left by a reductivist ideology – also affects thinking about the contemporary situation. In effort to grasp the ideals and their functioning in the social consciousness right here and right now, the thought inevitably slides on the plane surfaces of pragmatism and empty desire.[410]

Therefore quasi-metaphysics as a phenomenon emerges as a result of an epistemological confusion between the sphere of interest and pragmatism and the sphere of ideal, metaphysical and religious value. Over the 25 years, since the article was first published, the political and social conditions have, of course, changed. However, it still responds to the nowadays realities in at least two ways. Firstly, the materialist egalitarianism persisted within the post-Soviet societies in various forms. In some cases it remained embedded within the political, administrative and social culture as a relic of the Soviet past. It remains a matrix of thought, through which a lot of policies are still being conceived and implemented.[411] Also, what was called 'Westernization', which in this context meant profound existential change from the slave-like, non-political Soviet existence to a political *persona*, was understood mainly in pragmatic, materialist terms – through refurbishing the surroundings, instrumentally mimicking Western policies and political practices. There is a popular term *Euro-remont*, which circulates in a large part of the post-USSR countries and signifies the refurbishment of households and real estate using or imitating Western, not Soviet materials and Western styles. The problem with it was that it was still done in a Soviet manner, which was careless, eclectic, often absurdly out of context, but most importantly – very superficial. Analogically, in many contexts, the processes of 'Westernisation' of everyday life took on a similar format.

Secondly, the same levelling and instrumentalising way of thinking about human existence and political life can be recognized within the neo-liberal thought as well, when talking, for instance, about bio-politics and rational choice theories. Political processes are seen

[410] *Ibid*., 498.
[411] I will discuss this in greater detail in the third section of this chapter.

here as purely interest-driven game, where the motivational factors are if not purely materialist then absolutely pragmatic. Metaphysical and existential questions are either seen as serving the purposes of gain (for instance in marketing or election campaigns), or increase of productivity and performance (for instance in self-development courses, leadership seminars, couching culture, etc.). However, what interests us now is how this juxtaposition of hierarchy of ontological values influences political identity formation in the post-Soviet context.

Self-sacrification

Before discussing self-sacrification in the post-Soviet political context, which will lead to a better understanding of the deeper reasons behind the resurgence of what is popularly called 'right-wing ideology' in the Eastern Europe, it is important to clarify a number of issues. First of all, it is important to break away from the Marxist conception of 'ideology', which implies a certain logic that does not capture the dynamics of the processes involved in political identity formation. This dissertation is developing a theory that can account for the cultural 'construct' at a much deeper level of humanity than the arguments about the oppressive character of ideology and its 'interested' engineers. The latter way of thinking leads to the same quasi-metaphysical and therefore cynical assumptions about the pragmatic interests behind or above all the political reality, which Sodeika and Sverdiolas warned against. Unfortunately, this line of thought is without doubt the most popular and mainstream in contemporary Western culture. The most significant manifestations range from various conspiracy theories to films like 'The Matrix', 'V for Vendetta' and most others where the scenario line evolves around the weak, the meek and the downtrodden violently fighting the mythological 'oppressive force', after being 'disillusioned' from its 'ideology'. The most interesting aspect of this phenomenon of the contemporary culture of story-telling (both visual and verbal) in the West is that it repeats the same scheme of events on and on, basically rendering it into a kind of a myth of modern 'justice-making' on its own. This way, the violent events of the French Revolution, as Eliade would say, become an image that is put in *illo tempore*, becoming sacrificed and thus normative for the modern ethical teleology. This then is but another proof of the mythological nature of modern politics, spanning outside the context of post-Soviet states.

Secondly, the notion of 'right-wing' politics requires careful examination. At the political level it makes no sense in a context which has little to do with the French Revolution. One of many problems with the 'revolutionary' thinking is that epistemologically it monopolises the narrative of resistance to the establishment. It imposes a cliché that resistance happens due to materialist reasons or pragmatic interests, 'packaged' into the

coating of ideology. And that it is lead solely by the lower-most which are at a moral high ground exclusively due to the fact that they are weak or poor or suffering. Thus through suffering violence is justified. Empirically, neither in Lithuania, Ukraine or any other post-Soviet country, which went through a more or less violent overthrow of the establishment, is this the case. Experientially, I have demonstrated that the independence struggles both in Lithuanian and Ukrainian cases were much more profoundly rooted in the metaphysical and anthropological *problematique*. Intellectually, there are plenty of other theories originating these processes from different reasons and suggesting their different logics, such as Albert Camus in his book *The Rebel*, Patočka in his *Heretical Essays in Philosophy of History*, Gandhi with his teaching of non-violent resistance and Rene Girard in *Violence and the Sacred*, whom I discuss in this chapter.[412]

The structure of the post-Soviet political reality is profoundly different to the Western world because of the completely different historical experience of the 20th century and also because of a different post-USSR power structure. For instance, unlike in most of the Western countries, in the post-USSR context, the political establishment (not necessarily in terms of political power, but also in terms of methods, images and political cosmology) is often socialist or reformed Communist (under various different titles), while various quasi-liberal and 'conservative' or 'right-wing' parties represent the political and – most importantly – the intellectual opposition. Therefore the images of 'conservative' and 'right-wing' assume completely different associative meanings than those in the West.[413] Thus what we call 'right-winged sentiments' in Eastern Europe have a different meaning and derive from a different political cosmology than in the Western European context. The traditional 'right-left' division cannot be applied to the case without encountering various kinds of epistemological difficulties.

However, as mentioned, it is not to say that all forms of the identity formation process in the post-USSR Eastern Europe are desirable. As it will be shown below, one of the possible dangers (among others) that is related to the Soviet-style quasi-metaphysical thinking described above, and which also influences political identity formation, is *self-sacrification*.Here a distinction has to be made between the meanings of the terms 'sacred' and 'sacrification' on the one hand and 'saint' and 'sanctification', as well as 'holy', on the

[412]Albert Camus, *The Rebel: An Essay on a Man in Revolt* [L'Homme révolté], trans. Anthony Bower (New York: Vintage Books, 1992); Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* (Chicago: Open Court, 1996); Mahatma Gandhi, *Non-Violent Resistance (Satayagraha)* (San Diego: Questpath Publishing, 2006); Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*.

[413] This is why the conservatives in Lithuania often represent the more intellectual and progressive thinking, and why liberal democrats in Russia represent a kind of dystopian totalitarian holocaust, as do the national bolsheviks, who from a historical point of view are a paradox in their own right. However, there are also so-called liberals, who even though being in the opposition, are also in opposition both to the national Bolsheviks *and* liberal democrats.

other hand. The 'sacred' directly derives from the event of sacrifice, of violent destruction of a victim (guilty or scapegoated). By contrast, the words 'saint' and 'holy' are very closely linked to each other and refer to being intact, whole (therefore 'holy'). Sanctification does not destroy and offering is not violent. These are two very different manifestations of the metaphysical, and in our case, the former is important.

Rene Girard describes the relation between violence, sacrifice and the sacred. According to him, the ritual of sacrifice in the pre-modern societies was a way of forced, violent mediation with the gods, the provoked relation with the metaphysical.[414] Girard writes that "[i]n primitive societies the risk of unleashed violence is so great and the cure so problematic that the emphasis naturally falls on prevention. The preventive measures naturally fall within the domain of religion, where they can on occasion assume a violent nature. Violence and the sacred are inseparable".[415] Even if in the modern world the role of religion has been pushed to the margins of the political life, the experience of extra-ordinary nature of violent situations persists. Dramatically speaking, it is within the close encounter with death that the value of life and all its aspects comes to the fore, in a sense invoking the extatic experience of living in truth that Havel was talking about. The moment of violence is a critical moment, be it in the context of internal affairs, a literary or cinematographic narrative or within the international politics. After these occurrences things are never the same as they were, and the actors are existentially changed within the process. It therefore bears close resemblance to the liminal conditions, existential transition and to formation of new identity.

At this juncture the focus will shift back to the cases of *sąjūdis* and *Maidan*. Among many other elements that connect them (and those that separate them as well), an element of self-sacrifice stands out as particularly striking. In the Lithuanian case, on 13th January 1991, massive crowds of unarmed people were literally pushing Soviet tanks with their bare hands, in efforts to stop them.[416] Fourteen people died and many were injured during the events on that night.

In Kyiv, Ukraine, during the tragic events of 18th to 20th February 2014, well over a hundred people died and several hundred were injured as a result of clashes between the crowd and the riot police and Ukrainian Special Forces. In this case, the protesters were armed, and bearing in mind the contagious and volatile as well as mimetic nature of violence, this might have been one of the reasons (besides intentional provocations by other parties) why it spread into an even bigger crisis. Yet the weapons that Maidan's

[414] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 6-27.
[415] *Ibid*. 19.
[416] See appendix 7.

fighters were using consisted mainly of sticks, stones, shields, Molotov cocktails, and an occasional firearm, and were no match for the officials, who were armed with live ammunition-loaded firearms of various kinds, sniper rifles included, different kinds of grenades as well as anti-riot and military vehicles.[417]

In both cases, though, after literally self-sacrificing struggles, the victory was won by the less advantaged party, and in both cases the victory meant profound changes in both political conditions and political identities within the states – a profound change in their political *personae*. In the Lithuanian case, the January events dispersed any ambiguities about the country's legitimacy and *de facto* political existence, and in the Ukrainian case, the victory meant a break with its experiential Soviet existence. The mentioned sacrifices have been memorialized and embedded in profoundly important, emotionally and associatively charged national symbolism. Those who sacrificed their lives were commemorated with massive public ceremonies of mourning and burial, which by nature were both political and religious rites.

Massive ritualized political burial of independence fighters in Vilnius, 1991 (left) (Butkutė, 2013, 278.) and Kyiv, 2014 (right). ("Украина оплакивала героев "Небесной сотни". Фото [Ukraine Mourned the Heroes of the "Heavenly *Sotnia*". Photo]," *Ukrinforom.ua*, http://www.ukrinform.ua/rus/news/ukraina_oplakivala_geroev_nebesnoy_sotni_foto_1606160(Last accessed on March 2015).

This way, through these sacrifices, the entire societies have been experientially and factually transformed. They have lost their close ones or those who represent the ideals which they were striving for. In a way the society has sacrificed them, even if in our case the victims have sacrificed themselves, in exchange for the greater good as it was perceived. According to Hubert and Mauss, "[…] even while continuing to move onward into the world of gods, the victim had to remain in touch with mankind […] Through this proximity the victim, who already represents the gods [in our case – the ideals], comes to represent the sacrifier also. Indeed it is not enough to say that it represents him: it is

[417]See appendix 9.

merged within him."[418] Therefore sacrifice is a moment of merging, the interlinking of the sacrifier and the godly, a media for transformative reconciliation.

Therefore the act of scarifying of the victims at the same time also began to include and represent the society as a whole. Through this connection, the society 'purified' and transformed *itself*. Because of this connection to the metaphysical, the political *persona* and the political struggle also became metaphysical. In our cases, these sacrifices became a symbolical manifestation of the existential freedom and dignity that the societies which participated in the struggles, were striving for. However, if the ideals are different, if the quasi-metaphysical political ideals are those of ethnic purity, of racial superiority, or indeed of 'working-class' righteousness, the destructive quasi-metaphysical narrative is born, and various violent consequences may follow. This explains the anthropological meaning of the commemoration and symbolism of victims of various political struggles. After the violent sacrifice has happened, they no longer represent the actual people who died as much as they represent the sacred, the quasi-metaphysical, the ideal, which now the society can be in touch with and claim as part ofits own political *persona*, hence the "Godly *Sotnia*" in Maidan.

Victimhood-based identity

We thus see the process of identity formation at its barest. The mask-identity of the ideals that are pursued is perceived as an internal part of the actor, as if it were owned by it. However, in case the entire process is violent and uncontrolled, it involves an inevitable sense of victimization, along with the wish for revenge, a sense of injustice, of suffering and tragedy.The sacrificial rituals were there in order to contain these powerful violent, tragic, unclean energies and provide them with form, to restore harmony. [419] They were also there for separating the sacred event of sacrifice from the ordinary, the secular – what we nowadays call political. Therefore, after the ritual had taken place, the society can come back to the political realm 'purified', no longer sullied by the event of violence and the contagious experiences related. Huber and Mauss discuss various ways in which these destructive human impulses were dealt with in pre-modern societies, whether by the means of taboos, religion, or strict customary codes.

However, when it comes to the Modern taboos, customary codes and secular religiousness (such as scientific atheism or Communism), the traditional boundaries no longer apply. This way, after such violent events, the purification of the society does not take place, and the Modern mask-identity often becomes highly infused with a violent or victimized

[418] Hubert and Mauss, *Sacrifice*, 31-32.
[419] Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 8.

character, while at the same time remaining virtuous, and infused with the 'godly', quasi-metaphysical ideals. The sense of victimhood and self-righteousness encourages the ethno-centric, chauvinistic sentiments through violent, sacrificial political events. The best contemporary example here is some local population of Donbass region, which after experiencing war and bombardment from both fighting sides, and having been constantly fed with Russian propaganda, even if previously peaceful, now see Ukraine as a 'fascist state' and swear to fight it, sometimes associating their struggle with the sacrified image of the "Great Patriotic War".[420]

The political identity thus assumes a sinister combination of sacred righteousness on one side (because one has suffered), a sense of possessing or representing the ideas that the society has been struggling for, and a whole set of destructive emotions related. Other examples of such reality are abundant: from the Balkans to Israel, from Poland to Russia, from Hungarians in Romania to the emerging mask-identities of 'Donetsk and Luhansk republics' and the intentionally fabricated contemporary image of 'Novorossyia'. Therefore there is a strong connection between the popular (non-intellectual) 'right-wing' movements and a quasi-metaphysical mask-identity of a victim.

Sodeika and Sverdiolas argue that the quasi-metaphysical 'mentality' is very tightly related to Marxist thought that underpinned Soviet culture. The Soviet experience introduced the self-pitying and, at the same time, paradoxically glorifying revolutionary character of victimhood-based political identity. It is the 'oppressed people', who, according to the Marxist narrative, have a quasi-metaphysical right and obligation to violently overthrow the existing 'oppressing class' for the sake of 'better' economic conditions. Therefore, as we have discussed above, it is the economic interest or a demonized image rather than the ideal or any ethical or spiritual category that motivates this overthrow. The negative, oppressive ideology that blindfolds the un-articulated mob of 'the people' prevents them from seeing the 'unmasked materialistic truth'. This kind of schismatic narrative dominated all spheres of Soviet life. At the same time it fostered a political culture where the leveling egalitarian principle introduced a quasi-metaphysical 'value confusion'. It is this principle of thought that prevented Russian narrative from interpreting Maidan correctly: instead of understanding the underlying moral principles that encouraged the independence movement, it sought to find the 'interested hand of the West' behind the process, and it was done at the highest governing levels.[421]

[420] See, for instance, "Residents at Risk as Ceasefire Crumbles: Russian Roulette (Dispatch 78)," *Vice News*, https://news.vice.com/video/russian-roulette-dispatch-78 (Last accessed: 5 March 2015).
[421]Andrew Higgins, "Peter Baker, Russia Claims U.S. Is Meddling Over Ukraine," *The New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/07/world/europe/ukraine.html?_r=0(Last accessed: 5 March 2015).

Mixed with chauvinist ideas, it produces a vulgar form of conservative, traditionalist but, at the same time, revolutionary thought and imagery which underlines the populist 'right-wing' movements. The image of the mob of people is substituted with an image of a nation and, the oppressing class is substituted by oppressing race, ethnicity or ideology.[422] Yet the call for violent destruction, overthrow and de-masking of the 'evil', as well as the sacrificial logics remains. Such political identity narrative is on one hand extremely pragmatic and materialistic while at the same time being profoundly self-righteous and paradoxically – unrealistic, dogmatic, and mythological. In order to understand how this is possible, we need to return to the discussion about the post-Soviet quasi-metaphysical political culture and understand the cynical implications that it entails.

6.4 Cynicism

The third 'vice' of the post-Soviet political culture, which explains the inner logics of the self-elevating quasi-metaphysical political identities, is cynicism. The infamous extents of corruption in the region are only one related symptomatic issue emanating from the Soviet political climate. There are deeper-reaching problems related to the phenomenon of de-sublimation of the metaphysical in politics. These problems are not exclusive to the post-Soviet political culture and in various forms are present in the Western Europe as well. This is mainly because the post-Soviet fluid and ambiguous human condition is very similar to the existential relativisation and late modern loss of reference points in the West as well. According to Sverdiolas, in some ways it even surpasses the West.[423] However, I would argue that the post-Soviet condition differs in that the cynicism here takes form using mainly Marxist forms of reasoning (such as collectivism, Marxist materialism, etc.), while the Western one emerges via liberal forms (through rights-based conception of humanity, over-rationalised individualism, etc.). In what follows, however, the focus will be on the former.

I will use Arūnas Sverdiolas's conception of cynicism which organically grows from his and Tomas Sodeika's previous considerations about quasi-metaphysics. In his book *Apie pamėklinę būtį* [*On Ghostlike Existence*], Sverdiolas presents probably the most significant Lithuanian philosophical analysis of post-Soviet human condition. The main claim that he puts forward coincides with what has been argued throughout this dissertation, namely that the Soviet and consequentially post-Soviet world is, as he calls it, 'flat', leveled, lacking

[422] Alexander Dugin has outlined a political theory that is based on precisely such sentiment in his *The Fourth Political Theory*. See Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory*.
[423] A. Sverdiolas, *Apie pamėklinę būtį*, 166.

hierarchical structure between metaphysical ideals and material interests, lacking substance beyond the superficial.[424] The two are merged into a cynical mix. Since the ontological category of metaphysics at the intellectual level has been 'cut out' from the public life and forcefully substituted by Marxist materialism, all Soviet reality lost its value, its ontological hierarchy. The resulting existential nihilism, the emptiness of cultural and political forms has been a recurrent theme in various political, literary and social contexts over at least the first two decades of the post-USSR world.[425]

However, Sverdiolas focuses only on the Lithuanian case and presents the discussion as an observation of the contemporary phenomenon. This dissertation will seek to develop the theory further, both expanding the spectrum of inquiry to encompass the post-Soviet space in general and demonstrate the structural origins of the phenomenon. In particular, it will demonstrate how the phenomenon of cynicism that Sverdiolas discusses can be used to explain Russia's behaviour in the context of Ukrainian crisis, and how it originates in liminal ambiguity, resulting from the levelling effect of sovietisation.

Kynicism and cynicism

Sverdiolas presents a definition of his perception of cynicism through discussing the relation between it and 'kynicism' following Peter Sloterdijk's thoughts (although disagreeing with his conclusions about kynicism).[426] Sverdiolas argues that 'kynicism' was a conscious, radical school of practical philosophy, based on "…a naturalist conception of human nature, the reduction or de-sublimation of the elevated (the metaphysical).

> A second element of kynicism is a drastic, shocking word and action, which not only publicises that which is usually hidden or explicifies the true condition of things, but also radically changes the existence of the actor itself, turning it into an "as if", a quasi-primordial one. This way it purely personally assures the actor's (but only his!) exceptional, sought after condition within the community of people: that of an insider but also an outsider; of being within it, yet outside.[427]

Therefore 'kynicism' is a conscious practice of self-marginalisation, of radical detachment through denial of the metaphysical, the cultural, and the normal (in a Greek perception of human nature) within the society.[428]

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[424] See Arūnas Sverdiolas, *Lėkštutėlė lėkštelė : keli dabartinės Lietuvos viešosios erdvės ypatumai* [A Flat Plate: Several Characteristics of Contemporary Lithuanian Public Space], (Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2006).

[425]Contemporary literature, film, music and visual arts, at least in Lithuania, are heavily infused with nihilist overtones; the first post-USSR decade in Russia was marked by harsh alcoholism nation-wide; and political passivity next to the aforementioned corruption, which is a recurrent motif in most post-USSR countries.

[426]See Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

[427]Sverdiolas, *Apie pamėklinę būtį*, 116-117.

[428] A kynic is a trickster par excellence. See Agnese Horvath's analysis of the figure of Pulcinella as a type of a political character, in Agnese Horvath, "Pulcinella Or the Metaphysics of the Nulla: In between Politics and Theatre," *History of the Human Sciences* 23, no. 2 (2010), 47-67.

Cynicism, however, (particularly in the Soviet world) is hidden, even to the performer, unarticulated and unreflected. At the same time it is habitual, overwhelming and indoctrinating. According to Sverdiolas, it is this kind of cynical mode of thinking that is present in the post-Soviet Lithuanian public reasoning:

> Thinking that values are worthless or that they are only superficial, only a façade, pretentious, easily and publicly reducible into interests and powers so that in the end "nothing matters at all", people tend to easily believe in any motifs of action, which are identified as the real ones, if only they appear to be cynical enough. […] Having found the real or only supposed interest, which, by the way, is in itself seen as a low or shameful thing, the real essence of person's or group's words or actions is perceived to have been uncovered.[429]

However, the same kind of cynical thought can be easily identified within various other post-USSR cases outside Lithuania. A typical example: on 20th November 2014 the Lithuanian president Dalia Grybauskaitė denounced Russian aggression in Ukraine calling it cowardly because of Russia's denial that the aggression is actually taking place. She also called Russia a terrorist state, which is hardly an overstatement, if one agrees that the Russia's direct aggression in Eastern Ukraine is an act of terrorism rather than warfare. The Russian Communists called Grybauskaitė's speech cynical, demanding to terminate Russia's and Lithuania's diplomatic relations. The Russian aggression is a fact, almost the entire World acknowledged it in the G20 assembly a week before, yet Russia is cynically denying it while, claiming own moral highground while calling others cynical at the same time.[430]

One explanation for such behaviour can be a tactful act of deceit, or *maskirovka*.[431] However the reasoning behind such paradoxical behaviour can also be understood via assessing the aspect of Marxist quasi-metaphysical materialism and obsession with 'unmasking the ideology', which is fundamental to post-Soviet political culture.

> The most frequent form of cynicism is probably the partial, fragmental and eclectic one, which merges the radical and destructive insight with components of a different kind: positive, proffering, dogmatic. […] Usually cynicism is not principal, philosophical, but instrumental, applicatory. Instead of being conscious, reflective, cultivated and consecutive, it is a spontaneous, domestic way of thinking, an anonymous, non-critical *doxa*. […]
>
> Cynicism may also not be public, but dwell in the private sphere, as a secret, undeclared, yet real basis for thought and action. Eventually it merges with boorish shiftiness. This contrasts most significantly with kynicism, which was essentially

[429] Sverdiolas, *Apie pamėklinę būtį*, 126.
[430] "Kodėl Maskva Užsipuolė Dalią Grybauskaitę [Why Did Moscow Attack Dalia Grybauskaitė]," *Delfi.lt*, http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/rusijos-valstybes-dumoje-siulymas-nutraukti-diplomatinius-santykius-su-lietuva.d?id=66460864 (Last accessed: 25 February 2015).
[431] "*Maskirovka*: Deception Russian Style," *BBC Radio*, http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b050674y (Last accessed: 5 March 2015).

public-oriented, intended for publicity and also transforming it. However, kynic's desublimation of the metaphysical is also characteristic for a cynic with a mask."[432]

Finally, while a kynic's action is intentionally public and principal, cynicism, especially the one that can be found in the post-Soviet context is concealed even to the actor:

> […] it is others who become reducible, de-sublimable, and cynically obvious. That is the case with motifs of others but not one's own intentions, not the cynic himself.
>
> This is often related to the aforementioned partiality and eclecticism: the cynical explanation for actions and their motifs is directed exclusively towards actions of others, often – towards all the others, somehow maintaining a sublime motivation for justifying one's own actions. This way, the Catholics accuse the so called sects of having a "psychological effect" upon their members, while at the same time forgetting that a bit more than a dozen years ago the Soviet atheists were using the same argument against the Catholics themselves. One's own intention to have an effect is defined completely differently, appealing to the sublime level, - that is the so-called evangelisation. How do you evangelise or change people's mind-set in general without causing a psychological effect? Yet the aim of the defender of other, different values is no longer being recognised as a respect-worthy thing; his activity is being discussed in a purely technological, naturalistic way, unmasking the interests, i.e. cynically. Hence I am always an idealist, but him, him and him – they are cynics.[433]

This kind of practice is easily recognizable in various political scenarios, and, as mentioned, not only in Lithuanian or even post-Soviet case. It is enough to mention only a few obvious cases such as Russia's accusations towards the US and NATO regarding support for Ukraine, when its own actions towards the Eastern Ukrainian separatists are titled 'humanitarian aid'; the self-righteous tone of the US towards Russia, when the US's own interventions in the Middle East had motivations that were as cynical as Russia's; or the Israel's monopolising appeal towards the victimhood during the World War Two, when at the same time pursuing large-scale violence in Palestine.

Therefore, it is a characteristic mechanism that originates as a result of a certain human condition, not contingent or a political, cultural or other contextual particularity, although in our case having a historical root in Marxist modernity. The result of such a mind-set is the

> inversion probably at the most important, innate axis of personality: in this case, cynical thinking is no longer based upon an essentially unique radical theory and practice, which removes a person from the community, agonizing and radically, drastically liberating the person from belonging to it. Instead it becomes a means of explaining actions of others, which personally costs nothing and has no repercussions, yet releases one from any kind of scruples towards the others: if they are such animals, you are free to act towards them in any way you like […].[434]

[432] Sverdiolas, *Apie pamėklinę būtį*, 118-119.
[433] *Ibid*., 119.
[434] *Ibid*., 120.

Therefore the contemporary post-Soviet cynicism is culturalised and pervades the society at all levels – the historical and political reality, the intellectual articulations of this reality as well as the experiential level, through being embedded in this reality.[435]

Discrepancy between political form and practice

The Ukrainian crisis and the resulting Russia's behaviour in the international arena during 2014 have caught the international community completely off guard. Russia, which, as many believed, was on its transition to liberal democracy, or as others believed was developing its own form of so called 'managed democracy', all of the sudden acted in a completely unexpected way. The phenomenon which is sometimes called the 'hybrid war', when the actual war is never declared despite being well under way, and encompassing not only active military actions, but also propaganda, spying, diplomacy, cultural and economic measures, stepped out of any boundaries that the Western political culture had conceptualized.[436]

At the same time, Russia maintains a formal narrative, formally imitating normal foreign policy, taking offence when called an aggressor, arguing against its involvement in the war and accusing others of disregard for international law and ethics. This practice has confused many European politicians and intellectuals, who for a long period of time believed in their own "rules of the game" and that Russia abides by those rules. In the West, the legislation and international norms are taken for granted and thus it was so difficult to conceptualise Russia's behaviour.[437]

However, if we assess the functional role that cynicism plays in the post-Soviet political cosmology, we may as well understand the logics of Russia's foreign policy. Cynicism is a 'systematic element' of Soviet political rationale that has formed in the Soviet Union:

> Elementary formulas, which were being spread and multiplied massively and daily [In the Union] claimed that democracy and rule of law are formal things, under which the rule of real power hides; it is being intentionally or even unintentionally

[435] *Ibid*., 124-125.

[436] It was thus titled as terrorism, and Russia, being the main direct and indirect aggressor in this war, was labelled as a terrorist state. An argument could be made both for and against such a title. On one hand, Russia's actions in the Eastern Ukraine are violent and aggressive, intentional and politically motivated, and do not correspond fully to any traditional definition of war. This way it resembles terrorism (There are other arguments in favor of this title as well. See: Alexander J. Motyl, "Putin's Russia as a State Sponsor of Terrorism," *World Affairs*, http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/blog/alexander-j-motyl/putin%E2%80%99s-russia-state-sponsor-terrorism (Last accessed: 25 November 2014)., On the other hand, Russia was called a terrorist state because it supports what was titled as terrorism by Ukrainian government, which justified the implementation of "anti-terrorist actions" by the same government. This therefore renders the entire situation quite tautological. One thing that is clear is that Russia's actions are completely unconventional, formless, and thus even more dangerous.

[437] In a recently published book, Peter Pomerantsev delves deeply into the surreality of Russian politcs, uncovering the liminality at the core of its political culture. See Peter Pomerantsev, *Nothing is True and Everything Is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the New Russia* (New York: Public Affairs, 2014).

> hidden. Therefore formal automatically meant unreal. This resonates in the Lithuanian language: the Lithuanian word *formalus* does not have a meaning that an English word *formal* has. It lacks the meaning of "correct", "corresponding to the rule", and therefore almost "real". For us, formal is *only* formal, therefore not the real one.[438]

The Russian word *формальный* has the same meaning as Lithuanian, and that is the Soviet heritage. Here, the reality of a political form, of political legislation, of an agreement, of international convention is lacking.[439] It is *only* a formality. It is *only* an image. And in a cynical Soviet world, no one expects it to be anything else. Formality is something that one can play with, circumvent and cover the reality with, if the 'real' factors require. There is a void between the reality and formality; there is no actual connection between the two, which allows for absolutely pragmatic behaviour while declaring allegiance to any ideals that serve the cynical purpose.

One can apply this to the topic of Euro-integration in the Eastern European context, for instance. The process started as a blunt imitation of Western political forms, without understanding, and assuming the ideal, metaphysical foundation of these forms. In many cases the European cultural forms, liberalism, democratic narrative and other metaphysical values were mimicked in effort to reach the European funds, not necessarily because of strong convictions (even though the image of the 'Western good' was and is still a widely accepted category). And this cynical explanation to a large extent does not surprise, which makes the situation even more schismatic and contrary to the very idea of Euro-integration.

The important thing, however, is that this kind of political (sur-)reality is taken for granted, and from the cynic's point of view, as Sverdiolas argued, everyone is expected to act the same way. Therefore Russia expects USA to be acting in exactly the same fashion and based on the same motivation. It expected Maidan to be naturally a conspiracy by the Russian image of the 'West', discussed in the previous chapter. In Ukrainian's genuine wish and struggle for dignified, non-Soviet life, Soviet cynicism sees the conspiracy of quasi-metaphysical 'evil', which threatens the very cynical foundations that Soviet-Russian political culture is based on. The struggle against this intention becomes a struggle for Russia's image of 'good'. Therefore the same liminal mechanism that we have witnessed in various other scenarios, repeats itself over and over again.

However, surely, the same phenomena work in various different contexts outside Russia. And they once again lead to the pervasive liminal void of any firm reality beyond the formality. Sverdiolas gives a Lithuanian example:

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[438]Sverdiolas, *Apie pamėklinę būtį*, 124.

[439]Some title this cynical pragmatism Russian *realpolitik*. However it does not explain the fact why Russia, pursuing this *realpolitik*, immitates legitimate conduct in accordance with international norms.

> A thing of similar kind is the society's belief or disbelief in "realness" of institutions, which manifests as unrestrained voluntarist creativity. In the once again independent Lithuania, institution, just like the law, unexpectedly becomes a thing that is completely dependent on our whim; the dignity of either becomes inconceivable. The "Royal Union of Lithuanian Gentry" is created without the existence of any royalty; it could as well have been called imperial or galactic. And this association also unilaterally established the definition of what the gentry is. Surely, such auto-nobilisation, even if being exotic, unheard of, lightly put – controversial, comical and hyper-molieric, is overall quite a harmless and innocent little thing. However, the Dadaistic creation of such social associations and institutions merges with a national political activity of the same kind: the prime minister of the republic, in a monarchic gesture, grants a palace to this "royal association". [...] Universities and academies are also being established in a similar way.
>
> […] However, all these burlesques and grotesques are followed by an immediate cynical thought: "so much for the gentry", "so much for the universities". These pseudo-heterotopies are begging for homogenization as a *pseudo* sphere, things that are implied to be sublime are begging for reduction. However, a thought like that is a cynical thought, and in this case it is almost inevitable.[440]

The exact same process can be seen in the Eastern Ukraine nowadays, where the so-called 'national republics' of Donetsk and Luhansk are being synthesized within a greater framework of the construction of what is called 'Novorossiya'. Institutions are being imitated, referenda are being falsified, nearly none of the World's states recognizes them, yet from this nihilistic liminal context, almost tangible political forms emerge, mask-identities form. And yet the sense of 'Dadaism' surrounding this political reality provokes cynical evaluation. This way the cynical, the liminal, the imitated, become the base of political reality. It becomes contagious, just like violence. And that is the continuation of the essential component of Sovietism – nihilistic, liminal yet material and at least formally present, inauthentic existence of the post-USSR Eastern Europe.

6.5 Conclusion

The three issues discussed in this chapter can be brought together into a single conclusion. I have discussed three types of destructive and interconnected processes taking place in the post-Soviet world: violence, victimization and cynicism. All of them seem to have emerged from a single political reality – liminal Soviet context and its political, intellectual and experiential components. This existence can also be characterized by another less evident element: imitation. The core axis uniting violence, victimization and cynicism is their imitative character. Violence spreads like a virus, through revenge, scapegoating and retaliation; an essential component of victimisation quasi-metaphysical sacrality – the

[440] *Ibid*., 123.

fabricated, imitated relation with the metaphysical, imitating, assuming the role of the sacred; and cynical politics is based on imitation of accepted forms.

At the human existential level it can be said that the source of all three 'vices' is the sense of weakness emanating from the liminality that Sovietism is based on. Fear, violence, self-pity and nihilism – they all are a result of loss of orientation and the miserable Soviet human condition. At the same time, Sovietism is a brutal form of modernization, therefore the *problematique* is broader, and similar realities can be recognized outside the post-USSR world. Violence here is based on scapegoating and supposed to restore the order and purify the sacrifier, but because the conditions are innately liminal and formless, the deliverance never comes, and violence perpetuates. The existential experience of victimhood is being transformed into a quasi-metaphysical, self-sacrified political identity, which further justifies sacrificial mechanisms against others. And the formally, the sense of existential inadequacy persists despite the construction and authentification of various mask-identities because of the cynical basis that the identities are being invented on.

As a result, two main experiential themes that characterise the region can be recognized. On one side, the all-encompassing sense of fluidity and formlessness. Just like to Alice in Wonderland, in this reality, anything can happen. The little insignificant country can declare independence and perpetuate the downfall of a global superpower by means of unarmed resistance. A massive country can have a strongly centralized power, pursue aggressive foreign policy, be supported by various radical 'right-wing' movements, support various 'right-wing' movements itself, and yet be supported by the Western 'leftists'. A micro-state can emerge out of thin air, in the middle of another country, not be recognized by anyone and yet have a crowd of fanatic followers and supporters globally. In here anything goes.

Another experiential theme is a heightened sense of fatality, of existential 'weight' of life, politics and reality. The perpetuation of violence in various forms, as well as the overall liminal condition has also created a context for the close relation between the political and metaphysical. Politics here is not only about interest, economical gain, pragmatism and commodity. It has a much deeper, existential dimension, and this dimension is a perpetuating motif throughout the post-USSR period. It is this dimension that can provide answers to 'political paradoxes' that we have been discussing throughout this dissertation and perhaps to the overall political human condition of the twenty-first century.

CHAPTER 7. Conclusion and outlook

7.1 Introduction

This dissertation has sought to establish a theoretical framework for conceptualisingthe 'grey area' of a-rational political factors thatshape decisively the process of political identity formation in post-USSR Eastern Europe. One of the main arguments is that in order to understand the complex political reality in the region and its relation to identity, it is necessary to observe it at three levels: the historical/political, the intellectual/conceptual and the experiential. In fact, the argument goes beyond the regional political specificity, suggesting a new conceptualization of political identity and its formation in general.

To illustrate the importance of the a-rational factors at work within these political processes, the research has drawn on an array of material that is very diverse, ranging from theoretical articulations of the historical and political realities, to primary textual sources, to interviews, to photography and film. In terms of methodology, various theories and conceptual tools from across the fields of political and social thought, philosophy, anthropology, history and cultural studies were used, notably the notions of liminality, social imaginary, historical narrative, sacrifice and scape-goating as well as quasi-metaphysics. In turn, the dissertation has extended less established concepts such as mask-identities, political *persona* and others. This more holistic approach, which incorporates culture, human experience and historical narrative, provides a more creative, hermeneutically grounded and comprehensive conceptualisation of various political identity-related issues in the region than those currently present in traditional rationalistic theories in mainstream political science or economics.

The aim of this chapter is to summarise the key arguments of the dissertation and to sketch out avenues for future research: first of all, answering the research questions set out in the introduction. Secondly, providing a structural conclusion of the dissertation that draws together arguments from all the chapters into a single narrative. Finally, aiming to draw conclusions at the theoretical levelwith a view to identifyingkey elements for a new account of the nature of politics.

7.2 Research questions and answers

The main research questions set out in the introduction were as follows: (1) How is political identity actually formed? (2) How is political identity perceived and defined? (3)

What shapes the processes of identity formation and what is the role of transition in the process? (4) Crucially, how do contemporary post-Soviet people understand and perceive the 'being' of political reality, of themselves and of their country? (5) What methods and what rationale do they use when addressing the question of 'what/who am I'? (6) What strands of ideas had influenced such perceptions and what risks does this process of change and transformation hold?

In relation to the first question, political identity is being formed through the embedded participation within the historical process, experiencing it and articulating it intellectually. The articulations are based on the features of a particular historical narrative, political cosmology and associative images. New mask-identities tend to form within the historical process, and in this way the political identity gradually shifts and morphs, assuming new qualities, associative links and incorporating new images.

Regarding political identity, these images tend to form a narrative about the political 'self' (the political *persona*), and establish the existential reference points in terms of human experience. They signify what is experienced as 'good', 'evil', sought after, sacred, etc. With reference to all these images, the articulation of political identity takes place. Concerning identity formation, the process is not homogenous, and the critical, *liminal* periods are paramount for the shaping of identity. During these periods, cosmological structures collapse or are challenged, and thus the existing political forms merge, becoming ambiguous and 'liquid'.[441] It is at this moment that new ones form and new mask-identities arise.

In terms of post-USSR context, the two main external factors (apart from many internal cultural and historical ones) that influence the formation of political identity and the articulation of political reality (i.e. the creation of political cosmology) are the Soviet experience and political forms, as well asthe images of the West. Depending on these images, the political orientation within the different post-USSR states varies. In terms of human experience, political cosmology, culture and historical narrative, some states and areas can still be called Soviet, while others can be called post-Soviet.

In relation to methods and rationales that underpin perceptions of 'who/what am I', these conceptualisations are very tightly linked to the popular attitudes and political realities in relation to the Soviet past. A good indicator of this distinction is the memory narrative, manifesting, for instance, via the presence or lack thereof of Lenin's and other Soviet statues. Their density regionally seems to correlate not only with the popular attitudes

[441] See Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000).

towards the Soviet past and particular political preferences, but also with economic wellbeing and political culture.

Finally, the risk with the process of post-USSR transformation is that during these periods, various schismatic processes both at the epistemological and practical level can develop as a part of the new mask-identity, thus being internalised by the community/society. Despite the political change, Russia remains as an experiential continuation of the Soviet Union, and thus through the Soviet narrative, in some regions maintains its 'imperial' influence. The Soviet heritage includes the culture of violence, victimization and political cynicism, which characterise the political culture in the region, both in Soviet and post-Soviet experiential spaces (although to different extents).

7.3 The structure of the argument

This section will summarize the argument in order to represent an overarching narrative. The first chapter of the dissertation introduced the thesis. It presented an overview of existing debates in various academic areas from history to political science and beyond and positions itself in this context. It also defined the theoretical framework and outlinedthe main concepts and theories as well as the research methods used in the dissertation as well as its structure.

The main focus of the firstpart of the dissertation was on Lithuania, and therefore chapters two, three and four examined the Lithuanian case in relation to the three main dimension of identity formation: historical narratives, intellectual debates and the human experience of transition (in particular the experiential dimension of liminality). Chapters five and six explored the possibilities of a broader application to cases such as Estonia, Poland, Russia, and Ukraine. The aim was critically to assess the findings that were uncovered using the theoretical framework developed in chapter one, while developing the argument further.

Chapter 2

This chapter introduced the historical dimension of the Lithuanian case. Theoretically, the historical material was approached using the theory of *narrative history*, which implies an embedded participation in the historical process, as suggested by MacIntyre. This allowed for outlining the history the way that it is widely perceived in the Lithuanian context, while also critically reflecting upon the narrative and the premises of its emergence. The thesis expanded the notion of embedded history in further chapters, understanding it as human experience, introducing the aspect of liminality and this way forging a new conception of

identity formation as embedded practice. This approach allows for the existence of multiple varying historical narratives and emphasizes the semiotic importance of historical events rather than their analytical objectivity, which is exactly what is needed when discussing the area of a-rationality in politics and the formation of images.

Apart from describing Lithuanian history, the chapter demonstrates the *liminal* character of the Easter European region spatially, historically and experientially. An idea was raised that this condition of being 'in between' various political, spatial and cultural structures is an important formative factor for the region. Another emerging theme in the narrative, which is paramount for the region, is that of being at the axis of tension between the East and the West, which dictates the logics of various political and other processes and their teleologies. Thirdly, the dissertation emphasizes the importance of Lithuanian cultural specificity, in particular that of language, religion and agrarian lifestyle. This character of political identity, as it was shown in further chapters, is characteristic for other modern political identities in the region, from Estonia, to Ukraine, Russia, Poland, and beyond. Fourthly, the impact of the destructive character of the Soviet occupation on identity wasdiscussed and explained, and later elaborated upon in chapters 4-6, discussing its influence for the political processes in the region. Finally, the entire chapter serves as a contextual source of reference for the further discussion of political images, intellectual self-articulation and the formation of modern mask-identity.

Chapter 3

The third chapter was divided into three main sections, discussing three elements of *political cosmology*. The term signifies a particular set of images, narratives and experiences shared by a group of people, which constitutes a unique and integral perception of political reality and own *political persona*. In the first section, theories by Charles Taylor and Raoul Girardet were merged. As a result, the dissertation introduced a new concept of *images*.

Images are associative, symbolic and emotional, yet reflected meanings that constitute a particular and unique conceptualization of the surrounding political reality in a particular society. They emerge as a result of factual events, human experience of these events and their intellectual conceptualization. As a demonstration, several popular post-Soviet Lithuanian images were suggested, discussing their character, purpose and context. In subsequent chapters, especially chapters 5 and 6, I sought to demonstrate how identity narratives in other post-USSR countries also use similar images not only to ground their political self, but also to pursue real, interest-based politics.

The second section discussed a notion of *tauta*, which signifies the modern Lithuanian *political persona*. I suggested that *political persona* is a unique cultural-political articulation of the political self in the society. In Lithuanian case, three main strands of thought within the intellectual debates of the twentieth century were discussed. These were grouped into the *mythological establishment*,the *modern rationalist and materialist critique* andthe *culturalist and personalist alternative*. It was within the deliberations between these intellectual strands, throughout the lived historical process, that the modern Lithuanian *tauta* has been articulated and emerged as an existential identifier for Lithuanians.

The final section dealt with the most complex question in the chapter – that of authenticity. Basing an argument on Pizorno's understanding of a cultural and social role of a mask and expanding it from a cultural and social analysis of a religious phenomenon in a tribal society to encompass modern societies, the dissertation derived a concept of *mask identity*. This was done in order to merge the prominent gap in the mainstream identity-related debates between the primordialist and constructivist conceptions of identity. The dissertation offered a new perspective, basing its explanation on the faculty of human experience and the phenomenology of participating within the political process. The section argued that the largely non-factual, symbolic intellectual construct can become an authentic part of political *persona* through political participation. Actual people, through participating in a political process – through founding their existence on the conceptualised *identitymask* such as nationality, religion, or perhaps even gang membership – 'authentify' it and render it a part of who they are existentially and politically. This way, a 'construct' is rendered into a real, tangible political reality.

Chapter 4

This chapter explored in greater detail the experiential level of identity formation, observing the process of intellectualisation of the political reality via embedded human experience. The aim was to examine questions about the existential importance of political identity to actual Lithuanian people. Another reason why I chose to focus on this particular historical episode was because of its *liminality*. This was the period of profound challenges for the nature, *status quo* and structure of the Lithuanian political identity. Because there is not enough time to reflect upon and rationally process the shifting situation as it unfolds under those conditions, the a-rational factors become of particular importance.

It is under these *liminal* conditions, however, in revolutions, in war times, occupations, natural disasters and similar situations that new political entities and new identities often

emerge. They are therefore also crucial for understanding the experiential level of the post-Soviet transition. These human experiences of struggle, victimhood and liminality, as well as the newly-formed images of the self and the surrounding world was what formed the post-Soviet Lithuanian *political cosmology*. Religion and *quasi-metaphysics* plays an important role in the process as well, as it renders what would be seen as a political power struggle into an existential one and adds metaphysical dimension to the process of self-creation. The negative side of this theme is discussed in greater detail in the sixth chapter of this dissertation. The effect of the experience of this political identity formation can be evidenced even nowadays, when they have materialized into a tangible real foreign policy. Lithuania demonstrates a firm stance against recurrent Russian aggression, strongly pro-European and pro-Western policy and the overall prevalent anti-Soviet sentiment.

Chapter 5

This chapter demonstrates that the theory that this dissertation is presenting is applicable to other cases than Lithuania and explores some of the crucial themes mentioned in the previous chapters. It also suggests an interpretation of the concept of 'post-Soviet' from the human experiential perspective. It argues that from this point of view, regardless of the factual geopolitics, Soviet Union was and is popularly perceived as the continuation of imperial Russia. Therefore I introduced a distinction between post-Soviet (meaning areas and societies that are independent from Russia as opposed to those which are not) and post-USSR (meaning a historical period after the collapse of the Soviet Union in general). This then positions post-USSR Russia at a unique position and separates it from other former Soviet states.

The dissertation diversifies the notion of *liminality*, relating it to the context, introducing its three modalities. In terms of *temporal liminality*, it talks about the experience of being 'stuck in time'. *Formal liminality* manifests via an example, when Russian historical narrative and the contemporary identity-mask eclectically interconnects the three historically separate political narratives – Imperial, Soviet and Federal Russia, applying the image to contemporary politics. In terms of *spatial liminality*, three different political processes (separation, unification and division) are distinguished which invoke the liminal experiences. In all of these cases the established course of life is suddenly shattered and the new one begins to form, producing new mask-identities and other elements of *political cosmologies*.

Another point that the chapter demonstrates is that images in political cosmologies of other post-USSR states are as important as in case of Lithuania. This then proves that any post-

USSR narrative (but most likely – any other as well) are filled with mythological images, and that emotional and symbolic associative charges are profoundly important not only for those narratives, but also for the political purposes as well.

Finally, the chapter explores a situation where several narratives use same images. It demonstrated how the same images assume different interpretations in three distinct contexts and how based on these interpretations, and sometimes even manipulating them, real power politics are being influenced. The section also demonstrated how the way the images are represented in all three cases in fact is more descriptive of the *political cosmologies* that the narratives stem from than the very objects, which the images are associated with. This also suggests the applicabilityof the chosen theoretical approach, as the same interpretation offersfruitful insights into all cases – whether that ofLithuania, other post-USSR countries or even Western European states.

Chapter 6

The final analytical chapter of the dissertation is dedicated to discussing the post-Soviet political culture, as a unique cultural, political and experiential phenomenon. It focuseson the negative side of the matter, understanding of which might also produce positive future outcomes. Drawing on Arpad Szakolczai's work, the argument is that due to its violent, revolutionary character, the Soviet Union was always in a condition of *permanent liminality*. This experience of permanent condition of life under surreal conditions that are normalized provides the Soviet and post-Soviet political culture with its unique set of qualities as well as issues.

In order to pinpoint the erratic nature of the post-Soviet political culture, the dissertation used Rene Girard's concept of 'sacrificial mechanisms'. It applied it to the post-Soviet context, depicting Soviet culture of violence as the sources of these mechanisms. It argued that due to its innate imitative character, violence is at the core of post-Soviet political logics. It is the cause of a series of issues in the region, starting with ethnic and religious conflicts, self-victimization and cynical post-colonial political culture.

The chapter discusses the issue of victimhood and what it may imply regarding the formation of victimhood-based political identity. The contagion of violence therefore spreads into images and political cosmologies via *quasi-metaphysical*, yet political self-images, which imply the *political persona*'s immanent possession of metaphysical, often quasi-religious qualities. The chapter makes a distinction between sacred and saint, emphasizing that the first necessarily involves a violent component. This way a victim of violence may begin perceiving itself as a sacred being, which may lead to various

destructive processes, from the escalation of one's own suffering to ideas about having moral authority to 'do justice' upon others, which once again perpetuates violent sacrificial mechanisms.

Finally, the argument builds on Arūnas Sverdiolas's reflections on cynicism in Lithuanian political culture, which once again stems directly from the (intellectually) violent political culture in the Soviet Union. This leads to two outcomes: first of all, a form of political cynicism where the cynic is not aware of his or herown condition and, secondly, a political culture where political form is detached from practice. The dissertation supports these arguments with contemporary political examples from Russia and Lithuania. It argues that it is this particular, liminal kind of cynicism that is foundational to the discrepancy between political formality and practice in Russia's recent foreign policy regarding Ukraine.

The chapter concludes with an important final remark: all the negative political phenomena discussed possess a unifying characteristic. In their essence, they are all based on imitation. Violence is contagious and imitative in its social aspect. Self-victimization is self-imitative because only through reproduction of one's suffering can one maintain its quasi-metaphysical self-elevation. And cynicism is imitative because of its attitude towards political forms as formalities, which should be mimicked in order to achieve 'real' interests. I will also refer to this theme in the final section of this chapter when summarizing the possible prospects for the post-USSR region, as it appears from the perspective of the theoretical approach suggested.

7.4 Outlook

In this section I will discuss several theoretical questions, which derive from the discussions in the dissertation, and some assumptions that underpin them. These have not found their way into the main text, yet are intrinsically connected, continuingand expanding the discussion. Stating them here will provide better comprehension of the theoretical level and the potential of the approach outlined. Secondly, these questionswill highlightsome normative claims as well as lay the theoretical ground for further discussions on the topic, which is one of the most important purposes of this dissertation.

Three elements of political identity formation

A figurative question that this dissertation raised in the introduction is how we can explain what can be popularly called 'irrational behaviour' in politics (for instance an armless

defence by Lithuanians against Soviet tanks during the 'January events'). And how is it related to political identity? One thing that was immediately clear was that identity here has to have a much bigger weight and meaning than just a nominal function, responding to a human existential dimension. Only then could its conceptualization adequately measure up to the gravity of the problem.

Secondly, the question itself called for a non-rationalistic explanation. It either required a critical approach, to brush off these political realities as meaningless, malicious, ideological, lacking in substance, or inaccessible, or else a hermeneutic approach, an effort to appeal to them using non-conventional, non-rationalist methods and inquiring into their meaning at other than rationalist level (symbolic, emotional, associative, experiential, visual etc.). Even though political science ismost often reluctant to address these questions, other academic fields, such as cultural studies or anthropology, have ample theoretical resources to deal with them (Roland Barthes, Mircea Eliade, René Girard, Victor Turner, among many others). Therefore a need for an interdisciplinary inquiry emerged.

As a result, the dissertation complemented the traditional binary between empiricism and idealism, the factual and the reflective, with a third element of human activity – the experiential, mythological and emotional. This way it established a triadic grid of analysis for understanding political reality and identity formation, which sits at the core of the entire theoretical framework in this dissertation. From this perspective, political identity as an existential part of humanity emerges within the real political process, whilst being experienced by particular, embedded people and reflected upon using finite human intellectual capabilities.

This argument therefore merges the prominent disagreement between contesting theoretical schools about whether political identity and nationality is a primordial, ontological reality or is it an artificial, 'imagined' construct. A concept of *mask-identity* helps to understand identity, which is rationally constructed, as being embedded in the political process and as becoming an existential part of the participant through political practice. In this manner it developed Alasdair MacIntyre's ideas on narrative history. This way, through embedded participation, political identity becomes as much a part of political ontology as politics itself. This is an account of politics as a human instead of rationalized institutional affair.

Role of images, belief and mythological thinking in politics

What this dissertation is trying to show is the pervasiveness of imagination in the political and the vagueness of the margins of positive knowledge as well as the fatal and

unconditional incapability of a human being (no matter whether modern or pre-modern) to avoid metaphysical beliefs, indiscriminate of the origins of their rationale – the 'secular' or the 'divine'. The imperatives that derive from financial success (at least in part imaginary) of an individual are teleological, as encapsulated by notions of 'successful life' or 'quality of life'. The struggle for material equality is eschatological as in utopian communism and capitalism.[442] A concept of human equality in shape of a piece of legislation on human rights, in today's political *problematique* is elevated to a quasi-divine status, legitimising the launch of crusades against those who do not comply as against an objective evil.[443] In a Hegelian spirit, imaginary 'demons' and 'deities' of free-market capitalism, or the oppressive forces of tyranny are being confronted by abstract, fictional, self-righteous, physically non-existent images of 'the people'. Even though none of these things exist beyond the Western social imaginary, yet all of these concepts signify a certain experience of the political that leads their certain inevitably mythologised conceptualisations.

However it is not my aim to claim the necessary falsehood of these processes and conceptualisations or to 'dispel' the myth around them. It is only to point out the role of belief in contemporary politics. A lot of the motivations and rationale, underlying political movements, choices and struggles derive from the symbolic, the emotional, non-reflected, associative and imaginary knowledge (*mythos*) that is reachable through intuitive awareness (*nous*), rather than from the rational, logical knowledge (*logos*), accessible via the intellect (*ratio*) in the form of clearly calculable interests and motivations. And that has to be understood and accounted for in order to assess the complex processes this dissertation discusses more adequately.[444]

The importance of liminal condition

All these human factors become particularly important in a situation of crisis, especially, when one is to tackle the question of identity formation. I have discussed the finite nature of knowledge and the paradox of its necessity regardless of the imperfection. This is what

[442] John Gray elaborates on the motives of secular religiousness and eschatology in his book*Black Mass: Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007).

[443] Note the secularized, de-sublimated religious images still pervading the supposedly secular realm of human imagination – not as relicts of habit, however, but as images, conceptualizing the phenomenological experience of the situation.

[444]Such forms of knowledge as belief, intuition, recognition and wisdom have been pushed aside from the discussion about the political human existence as a result of series of processes in the Western culture, such as the emerging nominal division between the metaphysical and physical, the sacred and the secular (political) and between quantifiable/verifiable and the rationalistically immeasurable. The latter became associated with the personal thus relative and individual-contingent, and therefore non-existent 'objectively'. This contrasts with an emphasis onthe public, butthis is yet another artificial divide, most notably articulated by Habermas. See Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns,* Vols. 1 and 2, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp1981).Despite all these modern divisions, the mentioned unquantifiable aspect remains, along with the 'objective', 'measureable' and physical/material, one of the most profound factors shaping the political realities.

leads to the use of belief, imagination and mythology in politics, as well as existentially. I have also discussed extensively throughout the dissertation the process when the images, myths and identities form under this kind of conditions, establishing new forms of political existence.

This topic was most significantly addressed via the concept of liminality. As mentioned many times throughout this dissertation, it is a condition and the experience thereof, of the (non-)being, where the existential reference points are lost, and the new ones are forming. Alternatively, it can be a permanent state of fluid, mutable existence, of being 'in-between'. In relation to the region discussed, liminality becomes particularly important because it reflects its existential condition in many different aspects of post-USSR life: existential, temporal, spatial, formal, etc. In general, the entire region has experienced a dramatic crisis of Soviet regime as well as post-Soviet transformation.

However, this regional specificity (along with Soviet Marxism, geopolitical position and other factors) should also at least partially be blamed for various negative and destructive processes taking place. I have mentioned cases of violence, victimhood and cynicism. All of them are related to each other via two main aspects: they are all connected to a somehow erratic formation or conception of identity (via sacrificial mechanisms, elevation of own suffering, quasi-metaphysics or disregard for political form). Secondly, they are all deeply imitative by nature. If human knowledge is finite, it is dependent upon recognition; some things are recognisable more truly than others, which is blurred by the ambiguity of the liminal condition. This means that the existential problems discussed relate to questions of authenticity and recognition as well.

Possible pathways from the liminal condition

I have described the post-USSR European space as a unique region. Not only does it share a lot of common history, but also common human experience. The Soviet experiment of modernization, with its levelling and violent character, has pushed the region into a state of permanent liminality. With the collapse of the Union, all the newly-formed or re-formed states met their own different destinies. Some remained experientially (sometimes partially) Soviet, some took a rapid path of imitation, shaping themselves according to the Western standards. Several of the most important existential problems that all of them met was how to cope with the liminal experience the people of the region went through, how to find firm existential reference points, an axis of values to create new life on, especially in the global world, which finds itself in a general late modern flux and disarray.

In chapter six, I discussed various negative effects on identity formation, induced by this experience. On the one hand,there is the sense of victimhood, the inevitable reality of experienced violence, which is mimicked and perpetuated up until nowadays in various forms and contexts. A culture of memorials for victims, of self-righteous declarations of one's own suffering, assuming metaphysical virtues as a result is widespread. Another popular and prominent trend in effort to deal with the 'surreality' of the present existential condition is via strong-hand politics, which imposes rigid forms of life and belief, thus seemingly 'bringing order', while at the same time again succumbing to violent sacrificial mechanisms through scapegoating and blaming. At the theoretical level, new theories legitimising the right to take revenge for its own suffering against the scapegoated 'other' are being created.[445]

However, are there any positive existential choices for the region? In order to try and answer the question, one should perhaps look at the positive events in the region's history at the face of violent crisis and its unique intellectual tradition. If only very vaguely and in abstract manner, I would like to suggest an outline of such a path. The main threats that have to be tackled in order to restore some sort of existential, political and social normality is through countering the two destructive factors mentioned previously: the sacrificial mechanisms and the imitative behaviour.

As I understand it, there are two means for realising such a choice. And it has been demonstrated in several historical occasions, including the anti-Soviet activity of Charter 77, Solidarnosc, Sąjūdis, and to an extent (Euro-)Maidan. First of all, by recognising truthfulness in the human condition in the sense of assuming a dignified, radical and non-imitative moral stance towards what it is to be human. It involves acknowledging and recognising the metaphysical dimensonof the human condition and the abandonment of 'routinised' existence (as Patočka calls it), which is primarily based on a materialistic, economized world perception, imitated from the image of the West.[446] Here 'routinisation' is understood as commodifying the existential. Crucially, quasi-metaphysics is based on exactly the same practice. Perhaps the intellectual source for such a transition could be found in the work of Patočka, Havel, and the interwar Lithuanian Christian thinkers on personalism, such as Šalkauskis and Maceina, among others.[447]

[445] See Alexander Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory* (London: Arktos, 2012).
[446] Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in Philosophy of History* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 1989), 136.
[447] See Vaclav Havel, *Living in Truth*; Antanas Rybelis (ed.), *Antanas Maceina. Raštai [Antanas Maceina. Writings]*, Books I-XIV (Vilnius: Mintis, 1991-2008); Arūnas Sverdiolas (ed.), *Stasys Šalkauskis. Raštai [Stasys Šalkauskis.Writings],* Books I-IX, (Vilnius: Mintis, 1990-2012).

Secondly, perhaps the only means to stop sacrificial mechanisms that has at least partially succeeded was resistance through non-participation, through conscious choice, a refusal to perpetuate violence. It is arguably the only wise decision in the situation of imitative spread of violence, most significantly practiced by Mahatma Gandhi. Instead of pushing kindergarten-level arguments internationally that, for instance, Russia had a right to invade Crimea because the US broke state sovereignty via its operations in the Middle East, it is necessary to elevate oneself from the imitative violence. *Sąjūdis* managed to do that in 1991, pushing tanks with bare hands, even losing lives without retaliation, and paradoxically succeeded in defending Lithuanian independence. That means it is indeed possible and has been done.

Finally, I would like to conclude this dissertation with a quote from Gregory Bateson in an effort to support the hopeful position outlined above: "There seems to be something like Gresham's law of cultural evolution according to which the oversimplified ideas will always displace the sophisticated and the vulgar and hateful will always displace the beautiful. And yet the beautiful persists".[448] This dissertation has discussed the process of identity formation, of existential change and self-aggregation under liminal conditions. Various destructive and debilitating social and political processes prevent the Soviet "ghost" from leaving the lives of the post-Soviet people, partially because it has become an authentic, if not truthful part of their existence. However many instances in the history of the region have shown that even the most brute force or the most miserable lived condition can be countered through commitment to and practice of truthful and dignified existential disposition. The important task here is to find an adequate starting point and existential and intellectual premise for such a stance. This dissertation was an effort to open the discussion under such terms and to put forth the predominant *problematique* that is at the core of the post-Soviet human condition understood in both political and existential terms.

[448] Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature* (New York: Hampton Press, 2002), 5.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1.Genocide Museum, Vilnius

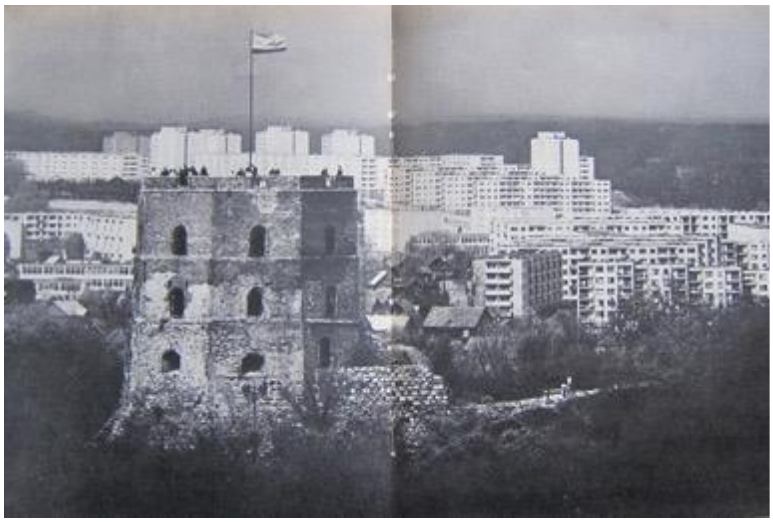
(Left) Lukiškės square nowadays, where a statue of Lenin used to stand (see p. 113) and the Genocide Museum (former KGB prison) on the other side of the street (right). (Author's personal archive)

Former KGB prison in the basement. Genocide Museum, Vilnius. (Author's personal archive)

Torture rooms (left and centre) and an execution room (right) with bullet holes on the back wall, behind the glass and blood drainage pipe on the floor. Genocide Museum, Vilnius. (Author's personal archive)

Appendix 2. The experience of sovietization in Lithuania

The radical modernist project of Sovietization in Lithuania (but also in many other places) was aimed at destroying the traditional local life and culture in most of its essential forms, ranging across language, faith, architecture, agriculture, art, and other areas. Instead, a Soviet version of these spheres of human life were produced and strictly controlled.



The industrailization of the landscape, represented as progressive construction of Communist future, was to be depicted in optimistic manner, and according themes were to be emphasized and depicted in contemporary art, which on its turn was strictly censored.

One of the requirements was that if a historical site is depicted in a picture, modern, socialist themes still have to be dominant; radiating optimism and communist values. Contemporary artists had to adhere to the requirements, and thus, if they wanted to express any "politically incorrect" sentiments, they had to do it in subtle ways, ambiguously and secretly.

For instance, sentiments of nostalgia, longing for freedom or similar motifs could be infered in the painful red tone, vivid birds in the sky and loose lines of clouds, all of which is being covered up by the "socialist dream" in black (above, "Vilnius statosi [Vilnius Under Construction]", Jonas Kuzminskis, 1977).

The dominant socialist optimism that is overtaking the "old architecture in the front is actually overcome itself by dark heavy tones and organic forms of the prior, making the block houses at the background look like visual trash (below, Valiulis, 1971)

Yuryi Slezkine discussed how the Soviets forcefully standardized traditional cultures of the Union's nations. (Slezkine, 1994) They formatted different ethnicities into *narods*, making them politically acceptable and existentially sterile. Via these immitations, Soviet propaganda could be successfully spread.
(Pictures above: (left) Levinas, 1989, 168; (right) Juodakis, 1969)

A certain materialist religion was established, glorifying production, yield and progress towards Communism. Traditional Christian and ethnic festivities were substituted with Soviet ones, with their own bizarre rituals, parades and demonstrations (etymologically, the term ‘demonstration’ derives from a religious context) and mythological characters.(Stanionis, 2002; Sutkus, Šervytė, 1987)

The most important, partially deified mythological characters were regime's leaders, whom people were forced to worship, often against their own will. Notice people's facial expressions in the last picture. (Stanionis, 2002; Sutkus, Žvirgždas 2000)

Appendix 3. Brezhnev time Lithuania

Works by Algirdas Šeškus artistically capture the material and existential dullness of life under Brezhnev in the Soviet Union. Rather explaining the existentialist dimension of his pictures than directly criticising the Soviet regime, he comments on his work: "[…] Indeed, these pictures show but a few things that we tend to lean on; there are few props in them to be exact. They provide no tangible props to live one's life with.

This "few" is only as much as is needed to confirm that something is happening, that something exists and that we are here. Because we only have two options: we "have a choice" between either not to be born or to be here until death." (Šeškus, 2012, 165)

An auto-shop in the Lithuanian countrysidewith a*kolkhoz* buidling at the background. (Šeškus, 2010, 189)

A bleak portrait of Brezhnev in the main street in Vilnius. (Šeškus, 2010, 29)

The dullness, poverty and unarticulated emptiness in people's everyday lives. (Šeškus, 2010, 185-262)

Pointless political rituals barey anyone believed in anymore. (Šeškus, 2012)

Appendix 4. Exiles to Siberia

Train wagons, intended for animal transportation, but used for exiles to Siberia. People were stuffed into them so tightly that it was impossible to sit down. Trains would go thousands of miles without stopping. A large numberof 'passengers' would die *en route*. (Grūtas park, author's personal archive)

Gulag barracks in Mys Bykov cape, Yakuta (left) and by the Yenisei river (right).
(Žemaitytė, 2010, 26; Sutkus, Žvirgždas, 2000, 126)

Several generations of exiles, having returned, protesting the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact
(*Sąjūdis* headquarters, author's personal archive)

Participants of the first exiles' gathering in Kaunas, 1989. (Juozas Kazlauskas' personal archive)

An exile, returning to his home land. (Sutkus, Žvirgždas, 2000, 127)

Appendix 5. The Baltic Way

Millions of people joining hands across the Baltic States in protest of the Soviet occupation.
(*Sajūdis* headquarters, author's personal archive)

Appendix 6. Lithuania's volunteer military and police force

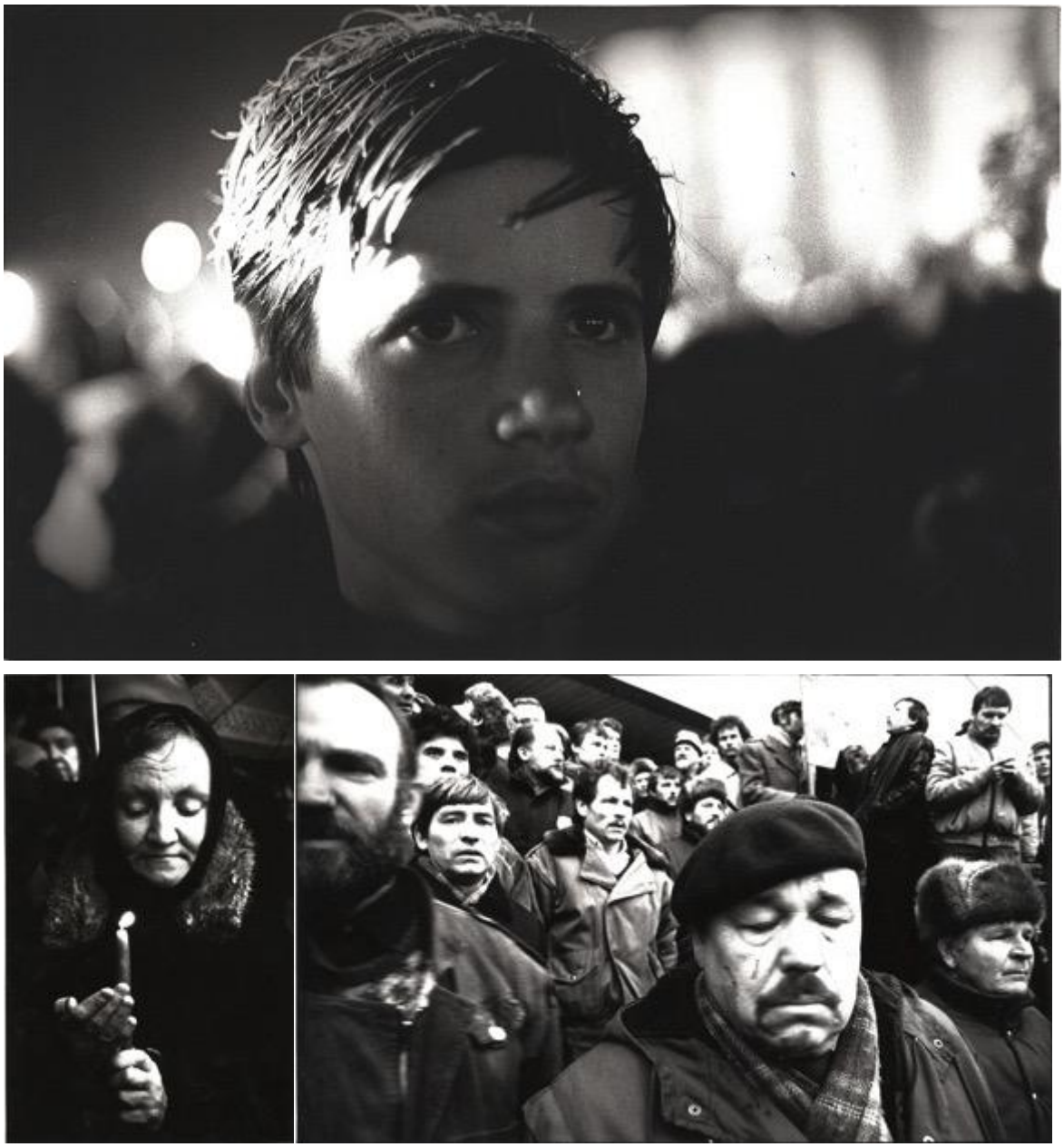
Lithuanian police force giving an oath in the Archcathedral in Vilnius. Notice the conviction reflecting in the face of the man in the front and the chandelier above his head hanging like a halo – a possible indirect comment by the photographer. (Juozas Kazlauskas' personal archive)

Young volunteers formed the first independent Lithuanian military force. (Juozas Kazlauskas' personal archive)

Volunteers standing next to the parliament, ready to defend it with their lives. (Juozas Kazlauskas personal archive)

A poorly equipped volunteer soldier at his post near the parliament. (Juozas Kazlauskas personal archive)

Appendix 7. *January Events*: political and existential struggle against Soviet 'evil'



Human experience during *January Events*: fear, uncertainty, faith and conviction
(Juozas Kazlauskas' personal archive)

Unarmed Lithuanians opposing the Soviet tanks during the *January Events* (*Lietuva 1991.01.13*, 1991,7-14)

Victims of the *January Events* (*Lietuva 1991.01.13*, 1991, 12-19)

Appendix 8. Political religiousness in *sąjūdis*

Reconstruction of religious and national symbols in Vilnius, 1989 (Juozas Kazlauskas personal archive)

A protest in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, with national and religious symbols. (Žemaitytė, 2010, 30)

”Jesus, Mary, I love you, save souls”, a text on the barricades near the parliament in Vilnius, January 1991. (*Lietuva 1991.01.13,* 1991, 26)

(Left) "God Almighty, save our beloved homeland Lithuania".
(*Sąjūdis* headquarters, author's personal archive)
(Right) "God will help, Lithuania will win" (Butkutė, 2013, 216)

Prayers, poster altars, crosses and images of saints by the parliament, January 1991
(Miknevičiūtė, 2005, 132; Juozas Kazlauskas' personal archive)

Appendix 9. Maidan in Kyiv, February 2014 (Author's personal archive)

A multiplicity of different flags all around the Maidan area.

Different facilities at Maidan:
- storage (top left),
- food distribution (top right),
- chapel (bottom left),
- library (bottom right)

Live ammunition used by Berkut: adjusted flashbangs, real bullets and buckshots.

Berkut‘s violence. Using their own Molotov coctails, beating the unarmed and threatening first aid volunteers, among others. After the occupation of Crimea, a lot of Berkut officers were honoured by the Russian Federation.

The image of 'evil' in Maidan: Yanukovich seen as a nazi (top left); Nazism and Sovietism are equally deadly forms of totalitarianism. The slogan asks "Are you for life or for death?" (top right); Yanukovich joining Putin in the same shorts where Russia is imagined as equal to Soviet Union, which is equal to nazism (centre left); A representation of Maidan's struggle: a skinny, weak human, oppressed by the Soviet sign, constructing Ukraine anew (centre right); Putin identified with the 'evil' via relations to Yanukovich, image of Russia/USSR and equation of Sovietism to Nazism. In slightly more than a month the image of "Putler"(Putin - Hitler) emerged.

Taras Shevchenko represented as an iconic Ukrainian Cossack, a superhero and a spiritual leader.

Swastika-like ancient Slavic symbols (of Indo-European origins) that have been used and abused for different political and other agendas.

Presence of different kinds of spirituality in Maidan. (top left) Neo-pagan community praying in the middle of Grushevskogo street.
(top right) Christian priests standing in Maidan. (bottom) One of many ordinary people carrying icons of saints.