Between Self and Other: Representations of Ukraine in Russian Official Discourse during the Annexation of Crimea

Eva Petershagen Åsbø

International Relations

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Declaration

I, Eva Petershagen Åsbø, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended.

This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature:

Date: 18.05.2016

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When I suppose I merely see what is "out there," that means I am oblivious to the particular spectacles I wear—oblivious, that is, to the presumptions underlying my inquiries and to the contours of those concepts which organize my perception. The result is unjustified confidence in the conclusions I reach and an inability to approach the environment from alternative angles of vision. I foreclose, in effect, avenues to the critical reappraisal of my favoured interpretation.

- William Eugene Connolly (1973: 27-27).

This thesis is a personal achievement, the possibility of which I have doubted one too many times. Luckily, there were those who did not – and for that I am grateful.

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Abstract

On March 18, 2014 the Russian president Vladimir Putin signed an executive order that officially integrated Crimea into the Russian Federation. The West condemned the annexation of Crimea as illegal, and Russia was accused of violating international law and supporting separatism. Simultaneously, however, Russia advocates strongly for state sovereignty, upholds that states should not intervene in the business of other states, and fear separatist movements within own borders. How then, is it possible for Russia to annex territory from another sovereign country, when doing so undermines state sovereignty and legitimise separatism? By applying the method of discourse analysis, this thesis has attempts to analyse Russian official discourse from the suspension of AA on November 20, 2013 to the annexation of Crimea on March 18, 2014, to see how the Russian annexation of Crimea was made possible. The thesis does not attempt to answer *why* Russia annexed Crimea, but to look at *how* the annexation was made possible through discursive practice. The analysis is built on a poststructural reading of the theory of Self and Other, that assumes that identity and foreign policy are mutually constitutive. The theoretical assumption guiding the analysis is that the social construction of a radical Other cannot in itself explain why Russia broke the principle of sovereignty and violated another state's sovereign territory. Rather, one must analyse the degrees of otherness and various Selves that produce several temporal, ethical and spatial identities. Especially the combination and struggle, between ethical and temporal identity constructs seems to make possible Russian annexation of Crimea.

Content

1. Introduction

On March 18, 2014 the Russian president Vladimir Putin signed an executive order that officially integrated Crimea into the Russian Federation (President of Russia, 2014s). The West condemned the annexation[1] of Crimea as illegal, and Russia was accused of violating international law[2] and supporting separatism (European Council, 2014b; NATO, 2014; Obama, 2014; UN General Assembly, 2014). Simultaneously, however, Russia advocates strongly for state sovereignty, upholds that states should not intervene in the business of other states, and fear separatist movements within own borders (Luhn, 2014; RT, 2015; Wilhelmsen, 2014b). How then, is it possible for Russia to annex territory from another sovereign country, when doing so undermines state sovereignty and legitimise separatism (Burke-White, 2014)?

This thesis aims to investigate how the Russian annexation of Crimea was made possible, and what implications these events have on the formation of Russian national identity. Through the theoretical and methodological framework of discourse analysis, this thesis investigates Russian official discourse from the Ukrainian government's suspension of the AA-agreement with EU on November 20, 2013 to the Russian annexation of Crimea on March 18, 2014. This is done to identify changes and continuities in the representation of Ukraine in this period that has made possible Russia's actions in the early stages of the Ukraine crisis.[3] This allows for an understanding of how Russian perception of 'Ukraine' is redrawn, and how this impacts

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[1] When referring to the secession of Crimea into Russia in March 2014 I use the word 'annexation' as defined by Encyclopædia Britannica (n.d.) as 'a formal act whereby a state proclaims its sovereignty over territory hitherto outside its domain.' I thus follow most scholars encountered while working on this thesis, and the term does not in itself denote whether an annexation is legal or illegal. However, there are different meanings ascribed to this term, which is necessary to acknowledge. Western politicians and journalists often connect the word 'annexation' with 'illegal'. Therefore, when they then go on to use it in a sentence such as 'Russia's annexation of Crimea,' Russia is given an active role in a process of doing something illegal. In contrast, the Russian government has denounced the Western use of 'annexation' as they see the events in Crimea as an act of Crimean self-determination in line with International law (Lavrov, 2014a). Russian scholars such as Dmitry Trenin (2014) ascribe the term 'annexation' positive meaning, as Russia 'assisted its local allies in holding a referendum' (36).
[2] For a debate on the legal aspects of the Crimean referendum see for example Chesterman (2014), McGee (2014) and Burke-White (2014).
[3] Sakwa (2015) notes that both 'Ukrainian' and 'Ukraine' are used to describe different crisis that emerged when the Ukrainian government suspended the Association Agreement with EU in November 2013. While the first term refers to the crisis within Ukraine, the latter denotes 'the extreme turbulence in international affairs and in particular in the system of European security' (261).

Russia's official representation of 'Self' in relation to 'Ukraine' and the 'The West.'[4] It also offers an understanding of the (re)constituted context in which Russian foreign policy is shaped, and thus allows for a discussion on future Russian-Ukrainian relations, as well as Russia's place in world politics.

I continue this chapter by developing the scope of this thesis. I firstly place it in context with a problematization of the Russian annexation of Crimea. Secondly, I account for the research questions guiding the analysis, and justify the theoretical and methodological framework. Thirdly, I review existing literature on the Ukraine crisis and Russia's role in it, and discuss my contribution to the current debates on Russian national identity and Russian foreign policy. And finally, I conclude with a thesis outline that summarises the content of each of the following chapters.

1.1   Context, problematization and objectives

The following section will firstly give a brief outline of the annexation of Crimea and secondly of how it was viewed by Western commentators while it happened. This is done to point out that Russia's handling of state sovereignty created a puzzle for Western commentators, who could not reconcile what Russia *said* about Ukraine's state sovereignty and how Russia *acted* towards Ukraine's state sovereignty. From a Western point of view, it was argued that Russia would do the same to other European countries, and Russia was therefore perceived as a security threat by Ukraine and the West; firstly, because they violated Ukraine's state sovereignty; secondly, because they appeared strong and unaffected; and thirdly, because they *could not be trusted*. As will be argued in this thesis, however, Russian politicians contributed to the maintenance of an East/West polarisation, and it is with the reasoning and assumptions voiced in a polarised debate I take issue; the growing gap between Russia and the West, and the fear of a Russian invasion should be problematized.

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[4] 'The West' and 'Western' refers to countries and institutions traditionally associated with Western culture, such as NATO, the EU and its member states, and U.S. and its aligned countries. Ironically, by using this term I am contributing to the same East/West-polarisation I go on to problematize. However, this term is used in Russian official discourse, and I therefore chose to use it throughout this thesis.

A brief outline of the Annexation of Crimea

Although Russian politicians claimed that they would respect Ukrainian borders, sovereignty and right to self-determination during the first stages of the Ukraine crisis, the West and Ukraine saw the annexation of Crimea as a clear breach of international law. After an escalation of tension in Crimea in February 2014, Ukraine and the West feared a Russia military intervention into Ukraine; however, the US Secretary of State, John Kerry received Russian Foreign minister Sergey Lavrov's assurance that Russia would respect Ukrainian state sovereignty (Rayman, 2014). Nevertheless, on February 28, reports came that unidentifiable masked men, armed with modern Russian weapons, had taken control of two airports on the Crimean peninsula (Carbonelle & Prentice, 2014). The day before, pro-Russian activists had seized control of the Crimean parliament building, and replaced the Ukrainian flag with a Russian one (QHA, 2014). The Crimean Parliament announced the same day that they discussed preparations of a referendum on May 25 on 'the widening of the authority of the autonomous republic of Crimea,' and it was speculated on whether Crimea would join the Russian Federation (Hauser & Preston, 2014). However, in a press conference on March 4, Putin dismissed a Russian military presence in Ukraine, and claimed that he did not consider the possibility for Crimea to join Russia because 'we will in no way provoke any such decision and will not breed such sentiments' (Putin, 2014c). He thus echoed what the Russian government, himself included, had repeated pragmatically from the beginning of the crisis – namely that Russia would respect Ukraine's sovereignty.

Nevertheless, eight days later, the Crimean parliament moved up the referendum to March 16, and announced that Crimea would vote 'to become part of the Russian Federation as its constituent territory' (RT, 2014a), and Russia was already asked to 'start the procedure' (BBC, 2014). The Supreme Council of Crimea declared independence on March 11, which was recognised by the Russian government the same day (Russian MFA, 2014q). The referendum was held on the proposed day, and according to official results, approximately 97% voted for independence and secession into Russia (TASS, 2014). Reports from Crimea during the annexation claimed that Russian military troops not only protected 'people from even the slightest possibility of weapons being used against civilians' (RT, 2014b), but also participated in military battle, and thus played a direct political role in the development and outcome of the events (Katchanovski, 2015; Paramaguru, 2014). The referendum and results were

accordingly not recognised by Ukraine or the West, who argued that this in fact was a breach of Ukraine's sovereignty (European Council, 2014a; The White House, 2014). So, even if Russia claimed to respect Ukraine's sovereignty, it was not perceived that way by the West, and Russia could therefore not be trusted.

Responses and polarization

A Russian military intervention into Crimea, although not regarded as unthinkable, surprised political commentators, who attempted to explain Russia's contradicting behaviour and predict its next move. It was argued that the consequences of violating international law where not in Russia's national security interest (Marten, 2014; Shuster, 2014; Treisman, 2014). However, when Russia continued into Crimea, several commentators claimed that Putin's actions could only be understood as irrational (Ioffe, 2014; Motyl, 2014a). Even the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, claimed that Putin was 'out of touch with reality' (as cited in Traynor, 2014). Putin's 'irrationality' was linked to Russia's 'grand plan' to reunite post-Soviet countries, where Ukraine was just one of several recent power show-offs. The annexation of Crimea, together with the involvement in Syria and the Winter Olympics in Sochi that same year, were regarded as ways to show the world that 'Russia is back' (Stoner, 2014). The argument posed that Kremlin attempted to make Russia a determinant voice in the international society again, and increase Putin's popularity at home to consolidate domestic power (Taylor, 2014). It was argued that Putin would continue with his plan to reunite post-Soviet space, which meant further interference into other state's sovereign affairs.

A second line of argument also warned against a further interference into Ukraine and other post-Soviet countries, and claimed that the events in Ukraine and Crimea resulted from Russia's wish to resurrect a Moscow-centred Eurasian imperial power (2014c). Some argued that Russia's imperialist behaviour threatened the existence of post-Soviet countries, such as Ukraine and the Baltic states (Motyl, 2014b; Treisman, 2014), Thus, Russia actions were an attempt to hinder Western values to spread (Krastev, 2014). Alexander J. Motyl (2014b) even claimed that 'Imperialist behaviour will make Russia a rouge state' and asked rhetorically: 'If Putin can get away with Ukraine, why will he stop there?' Thus, this explanation also assumed that Russia would continue to interfere into other nations sovereign business.

It should be mentioned that these opinions were published in formats that often require short, informative and, to some extent, 'sensational' takes on ongoing situations. Such an exercise is hardly an academic one, as the information is limited, and often biased, because it stems from media reports and social media-platforms. However, the point here is that the images (re)created by political commentator's impact how the situation is commonly understood, while at the same time nurture a well-established East/West dichotomy.[5]

Although Western commentators were astonished by Russia's quick-and-easy intervention into Ukrainian sovereign territory, Russia's annexation of Crimea is left standing (relatively) politically unchallenged – even after several confessions by Kremlin and Putin about the presence of Russian military forces on Ukrainian territory (Oliphant, 2015). However, the situation is still arguably perceived as a geopolitical crisis between Russia on the one hand, and the West on the other (Associated Press, 2016), and the East/West dichotomy continues to dominate in international security discourse. For example, the West have imposed economic sanctions on members of the Russian political and economic elite, which Russia countered with similar 'penalties.' Subsequently, the Russian government describes the situation as a 'new Cold War' (Sanchez, Robertson, & Melvin, 2016), and NATO talks about rearmament on the borders to Russia (Gibbons-Neff, 2016). Thus, Russian-Ukrainian relations are reconstructed as divided into two blocs and to a lesser or greater extent polarised by cold war-rhetoric, which increases the gap between them. The Western fear of Russian expansion and military action towards countries beyond post-Soviet space has resurfaced. Russia's growing military capabilities and will to use military power, together with its domestically unchallenged breech of international law and sovereign boundaries, paints a picture of a state and a state leader not receptive to international law.

Towards a poststructural reading
This thesis is an inquire into the notion, crystallised by Motyl´s (2014b) rhetorical question, that because Russia annexed Crimea and intervened in Donbas, it will continue into Ukraine or further into Europe unless they are stopped. As will be discussed in the literature review later on in this chapter, such an assumption derives from a deterministic approach to foreign

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[5] See for example Iver B. Neumann (1996, 1999), and Bo Petersson (2012).

policy, as it implies that just because a 'state' has done something once, it will do it again. From such a perspective, conditions that lead to the events of annexing Crimea could cause no other event, thus the same conditions can easily be repeated and have the same causal effects. Consequently, the most important focus of analysis becomes *why* Russia annexed Crimea, as this is perceived to foresee future outcomes.

Different models are used to answer this question; however, these explanations imply that there is an objective, underlying nature to social practice that we can measure. Either, that Russia has an innate or inherent drive to expand; that the systemic pressure from within influences Russia's behaviour so that it chooses to expand; that the Western power's behaviour in the anarchical system creates a security dilemma that forces Russia to resume to self-help and expand; that Russia's historical relationship with Ukraine and the West has constructed a Russian identity that *is* expansionist; or that Putin has 'lost his mind.' Thus, both essentialist, external or socially constructed factors can be measured as independent variables, that determine Russian foreign policy.

Although these explanations all incorporate interesting aspects of the issue at hand, they take for granted the conditions that form their respective explanations. Contrastingly, as will be discussed thoroughly in chapter 2, my thesis falls within the social constructivist camp of theorising international relations, which holds that nothing can be observed objectively, but that everything acquires meaning through and within social practice. This means that conditions commonly assumed to determine foreign policy, such as 'interests,' the 'international system,' or 'identity,' are not pre-given. They are rather 'created through social interaction in which we construct common truths, and compete about what is true and false' (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 5). I also adopt a poststructural ontology that regards foreign policy and identity as mutually constitutive and argue that if the premise for policy making is taken for granted – and this is the basis from which we theorise – then this will not allow us to analyse how structures are 'produced, reified, and naturalized' so that certain positions become accepted truths (Ashley, 1987: 52). Thus, an investigation into *why* something happened will not consider *how* this something became possible.

This is significant, because although the annexation of Crimea became the outcome, a possible outcome could also have been that Russia did not annex Crimea, and 'it is only by looking at the possibilities excluded that one can pinpoint the social consequences of particular discursive constructions of the social' (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 38). My interest is thus not to 'uncover the truth' about the Russian annexation, but to analyse *how* the annexation of Crimea was made possible, which can give insight into the possibilities that *did not* happen. I argue that this will allow for a broader understanding of how Russian foreign policy is produced, and that it is from this understanding we should assess how a Russian military expansion further into Ukraine and/or Europe can be made possible. This thesis does not argue the possibility for a Russian expansion further into Ukraine, or any other country for that matter. But, to just assume that Russia will continue into Europe because it *can* or *must*, ignores the process through which these 'must's' and 'can's' are constructed and accepted.

In order to understand how something is made possible, one must therefore understand how something changes, and to investigate change in the social sphere requires an inquiry into how something is made possible (Neumann, 2008: 62). This means that nothing is fixed, although it may appear as such. Thus, I follow the poststructuralist ontological assumption, that because everything is contingent (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 54), the world must simultaneously be in flux (Neumann, 2001: 14), and because the world is in flux, everything is contingent. However, what is assumed to be 'Ukraine,' 'Crimea' and 'Russia,' or what is thought of as 'Sovereignty' might vary and change in different contexts and at different times. It is this change I attempt to illuminate, as this can say something about how the annexation was made possible, and thus lay the ground for a discussion on future Russian-Ukrainian relations.

Research questions and analysis

This thesis, therefore, attempts to analyse Russian foreign policy and identity formation by drawing on the theory of Self and Other within a poststructural theoretical framework. The following questions guides the analysis:

- *How have Russia's representations of 'Ukraine' from the suspension of the AA on November 20, 2013 to the annexation of Crimea on March 18, 2014, affected/made possible Russia's annexation of Crimea?*

- *In what ways have the re-articulation of Ukraine affected Russia's image of 'Self' and its perceived place in the World?*
- *What implications does this have for future Russian-Ukrainian relations?*

By applying the method of discourse analysis, and the first and the second question will be answered through the mapping and identification of dominating discourses throughout this period. Although this is not a long period of time, such an analysis will show how quickly discourse can change. It will also illuminate the various combinations of Self and Other and how these construct several identities. Based on this analysis, the third question will be addressed and discussed in the conclusion.

The annexation of Crimea was a dramatic development in post-Soviet space; however, the Western fear of a further Russian expansion into Europe resurrects traditional East/West polarisation, and Russia is again seen as a threat to Western countries, and as the Other. Thus – it is necessary to understand how Russia articulates different aspects of the situation, in order to identify patterns in the constitution of Russian foreign policy and Russian national identity. More precisely, it is useful to understand how events internally and externally are constituted, constrained, continued and changed through discursive struggle, and how in this process discourse simultaneously is constituted. How Russia views the Self is not constant, and thus to understand how Russian foreign policy and national identity is constituted, will provide insight into how Russia is likely to act in the future.

1.2   Literature and debates

The scholarly field on Russian identity and foreign policy is extensive, and many has written about the Ukraine crisis and the annexation of Crimea. I will therefore only review a selection of the scholarship concerning the Ukraine crisis, which gives an idea of the different approaches that prevails. I also identifies two common debates before I move on to discuss a broader debate on Russian identity, and ends with a discussion on 'Ukraine' in Russian identity-construction, and will elaborate on important concepts in the construction of a Russian identity; the Other, 'little Russia' and the image of a periphery.

Ukraine crisis: Common explanations and debates

The East/West-focus and the perceived threat to international security posed by Russia is the basis for much of the political analysis concerning the Ukraine crisis and the annexation of Crimea. For example, the realist approach argues that the situation is not primarily Russia's fault, because Russia's behaviour in Ukraine was, and is, an act of self-preservation caused by the security dilemma. Because of NATO's military expansion and the EU's failure to consider Russian interests, Russia was left with no choice but to interfere, and the West is thus partly to blame for the Ukraine crisis (Mearsheimer, 2014; Rutland, 2015; E. Walker, 2015; Walt, 2014; Yost, 2015). Such an approach views the Ukraine crisis and the annexation of Crimea as a result of power politics between Russia and the West.

The realist approach is also common among Russian scholars. For example, in a collection of essays on Eurasianism edited by Kadri Liik for the pan-European think-tank European Council of Foreign Policy, several Russian scholars have given their take on the Ukraine crisis. Even if many of the authors critically assess Putin and the political elite in Russia, they also view the relationship between EU and Russia as a zero-sum game, and Timofey Bordachev (2014) argues that the West attempts to hinder a Eurasian economic integration. They disagree with the view held by for example Anton Barbashin and Hannah Thoburn (2014), who argues that Russia's Eurasian project[6] is dictated by nationalist Alexander Dugin; instead, Pyotr Stegny (2014) view it as an attempt to create an 'economic viable actor' in the global economic market. And while Pavel Salin (2014) argues that Russia should turn to China and Eastern countries, Vladislav Inozemtsev (2014) and Evgeny Vinokurov (2014) holds that Russia should cooperate with EU and North America. Regardless, they all agree that Western countries should not attempt to force their values onto other countries. This stands in stark contrast to the Eurocentric counterargument posed by for example John Ikenberry (2014) who argues that the annexation of Crimea is a minor victory in the geopolitical game that Russia is losing, because Western values is closing in on both Russia and China.

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[6] The Eurasian Economic Union – a project initiated by Russia to form an economic union with post-Soviet countries.

These theoretical approaches assume interests in the form of capabilities as pre-existing attributions, and explain actor's behaviour on the assumption of an anarchical international system. It is thus the system itself that predetermine what state's interests are and how states consequently act. However, these theories do not explain the demonstrations in Ukraine, or why Russia annexed Crimea, and do not provide insight into *how* 'interests' are constituted and maintained. The realist scholarship on the Ukraine crisis has thus been criticised by the constructivist camp. For example, Ukrainian-American Alexander J. Motyl (2015), has criticised the realist camp firstly, for ignoring the Russian-Ukrainian side of the conflict; secondly, for failing to consider norms, ideology and culture; and thirdly, for not being able to explain Putin's behaviour.

Motyl therefore falls within a Putin-critical branch of constructivist writings on Russian-Ukrainian relations with prominent Ukrainian-experts like Taras Kuzio and Mykola Riabchuk. They view the Ukrainian crisis as a Russian-Ukrainian war, and while Motyl (2016) has argued that 'Putin's Russia' is a fascist system, Kuzio (2016) asserts that anti-Ukrainian nationalism has deep historical roots in Russia. However, the most relevant article for this thesis is written by Riabchuk (2016), who investigates Ukraine as Russia's negative Other, and argues that the conflict cannot be normalised unless Russia learns to see Ukraine as neutrally different, and not just 'good' or 'bad.' He goes back to Russian historical roots to see how Ukrainian nationalism has been constructed as Russian nationalists negative Other, in order to explain Putin's and Russia's actions in Ukraine (76). A 'Europeanised Ukraine' remains a crucial part of Russia's imperialistic imagination, rather than a national security threat. Although Riabchuk operates within a social constructivist camp, and uses the Self/Other dichotomy to examine Russian-Ukrainian relations, he does not take into account the many Ukrainian Others that are constructed in the Ukraine crisis, which is what my thesis attempts to illuminate. However, he argues that a change in discourse is necessary in order to decrease level of conflict, which is also what this thesis argues.

Nikolai Petro (2015) also advocates for a change in discourse in order to avoid conflict; however, in contrast to Riabchuk, he argues that conflict emerges when the legitimacy of Russian cultures is challenged within Ukraine. The settling patterns in Ukraine, with Russophone regions in the southern and eastern parts, creates an internal division. He asserts

that there is a discursive distinction within Ukraine that nurture the conflict, for example by naming these areas 'Ukraine's Other,' or by suppressing Russian culture and language. A change in discourse that allows for multiculturalism and recognition of Russian culture will calm the rebels and give rise to a collective identity. This is also argued by Mikhail A. Molchanov (2015), who thinks the authorities in Kiev can, and have the responsibility, to change their discourse on Russian and Russians, in order to 'heal' the ethno-regional split within Ukraine. He also claims that the media and political leaders nurture conflict when Russia is described as 'Mordor,' insanity and other stereotypical- and vilifying labels. Even if Russia's annexation of Crimea can be seen as a justification of such rhetoric (207), Molchanov argues that the Ukrainian othering of Russia is a continuation of the historic evolution of the Ukrainian national identity (208). Thus, both Petro and Molchanov argues that discursive practice can be changed, which can alter the outcome of the conflict. However, in contrast to Petro and Molchanov who focus on Ukrainian discourse, this thesis investigate the Ukraine crisis by focusing on Russian discourse.

Several scholars have studied Russian official discourse in light of the annexation of Crimea, and two approaches seems appropriate; neoclassical realism and critical geopolitics. They will be dealt with separately, starting with the former. Neoclassical-realism differ from traditional realism as it attempts to theorise on why states choose different policies to achieve their political goals. Debates often concern the way in which variables at unit level affects how states operate in the international system, and they often combine the theoretical framework with constructivist methods, to see how politicians draw on history and uses 'cognitive filters' to influence the public. For example, Fleming Splidsboel Hansen (2015), unites neoclassical realism, constructivism and framing theory to argue that Putin deliberately reduced his policy options, so that he was left with no other choice than to annex Crimea. Thus, from a neoclassical-realist lens discourse is assumed to be a tool that together with economic leverage are used by the political elite to pursue national self-interest (Becker, Cohen, Kushi, & McManus, 2015).

Because of this, neoclassical realists often focus on to what extent increased nationalist tendencies influence Russian policy making, which can explain why certain policies are applied. For example, Marlène Laruelle (2015b) asserts that it is not possible to identify a

'nationalistic agenda' in the political discourse during the Ukraine crisis even if Russia in the aftermath might use nationalistic explanations to justify their actions in Ukraine. However, Yuri Teper (2015) argues that Russian official discourse, both aimed at a domestic and an international audience, appealed to national unification to justify the annexation. He concludes that national justification was seen by the Russian government as the only relevant argument for the Russian public (16), which means that Russia gradually turns to a ethno-national definition of identity and not a multinational or imperialist identity. Paul Chaisty and Stephan Whitefield (2015) also argues that Russian official identity discourse is becoming more nationalistic, and they read the annexation of Crimea as one way for Putin to nullify anti-regime criticism that surfaced after the 2007-2008 global financial crisis (170). They argue that Putin's 'nationalist problem' is that opponents who demonstrated against the regime also had anti-Western tendencies. They thus saw Putin's modernisation agenda as too close to Western, liberal economic policies, and blamed this for the financial crisis. So, in order to please these groups, Putin had to alter the narrative, allow for a certain degree of conservative, nationalistic sympathies. However, they still view state interests as governed by an objective and fixed anarchical state system, and discursive practice is thus viewed as instrumental rather than constitutive.

Another approach that is often used to study the annexation of Crimea is critical geopolitics; however, in contrast to neoclassical realism, they view the international system as a social construct. Although 'critical' implies that this approach aims to illuminate how power and geopolitics are connected, it derives from a poststructural ontological assumption that discourse is as constitutive practice. Their main focus is thus on how geopolitical space is constructed in relation to identity, and both David Svarin (2016) and Biersack and O'Lear (2014) argues that Russia's official geopolitical 'vision' after the Ukraine crisis and the annexation of Crimea is slightly shifted Eastwards, to a wider Eurasian integration. Mikhail D. Suslov (2015), however, looks at how the annexation of Crimea has been represented in social media, and argues that a 'Crimea is ours'-narrative in the Russian 'blogosphere' constructs the West as the Other from which Crimea is taken. In contrast to, for example Riabchuk (2016) and Teper (2015), who view Ukraine as the main negative Other, Suslov (2015) argues that the construction of Ukraine as a radical Other is so dehumanising that Ukraine is 'driven out of sphere of political deliberation' (598, 604). Although his focus is

limited to a small discursive room, he makes an interesting theoretical point about securitization. It is not the construction of a radical Other that in itself construct policies of intervention, it only becomes relevant when linked to other discourses, such as the anti-Western discourse.

This is underlined by other social constructivist approaches; for example, Hutchings and Szostek (2015), who in their study of dominant narratives in Russian political and media discourse during the Ukrainian crisis demonstrates how the anti-Western narrative has resurfaced and increased during the Ukraine crisis. They connect this to the narrative on Russian nationhood, which they see is enforced by the alienation of EU, the U.S. and Ukraine. This reproduce the idea of Russia as a Great Power that balance U.S. world hegemony. However, they also identify competing, although less influential, discourses, such as an isolationist Russian nationalism versus the imperialist idea of a multicultural Russia aspiring to Soviet times. They agree that the political rhetoric can be applied instrumentally, but asserts that it at the same time 'frames how Russians (…) interpret world politics,' and thus is internalised among the Russian authorities (185). In line with Barbashin and Thoburn (2014), but contrary to Laruelle (2015a), they claim that Dugin's nationalism has influenced official discourse, and just as Teper (2015), they argue that Russian official identity discourse is tilting towards nationalism.

Two main debates can be identified in the selected research on the Ukraine crisis reviewed above; whether Russian foreign policy discourse is 'national' or 'imperial,' and whether the Ukraine crisis is a Russian-Ukrainian conflict or a Russian-Western conflict. This thesis addresses both debates indirectly; however, the aim is not to pick sides in either. Russia is, undoubtedly, a major actor in the conflict; however, in Russian official discourse, the crisis is constructed as *both* a Russian-Ukrainian conflict and a Russian-Western conflict. The various constructions of Self and Other and degrees of otherness within Russian official discourse articulates a range of identity constructions, both imperial and national, and it is the struggle between these discourses that attracts my attention. My inquiry is thus not to answer *why* Russia annexed Crimea, or *whether* this is an imperial or national manifestation. I wish to contribute to the debate by looking at *how* the annexation was made possible, by looking at the construction and reconstruction of identity in Russian official discourse. I thus approach

the critical geopolitical literature; however, in addition to the spatial reconstruction of Crimea, I include temporal and ethical aspects of identity constructions.

Russian identity and foreign policy

This thesis therefore engages in a more general debate about Russian identity and foreign policy within social constructivism in International Relations-theory, that view Russian identity as a social construct. Several authors have written on the role of identity in Russian foreign policy construction; however, these often combine primordial and subjective factors.[7] I draw mostly on Iver B. Neumann (1996a, 1999), and his studies of Self and Other in Russian and European identity formation, as he view foreign policy and identity as mutually constitutive. He theorises Russian identity as constructed through differentiating Self from Other, and emphasises the image of *strangers* in this process. Europe and later the West has functioned as strangers (Other) in Russian identity formation, and Neumann (1999) therefore affirms Carl Schmitt's argument that foreign policy is the approach through which a state distinguishes public enemies from friends (12). The notion of the Other is thus important in Russian identity construction.

However, this thesis is also interested in the degrees of otherness and variations of Selves through which foreign policy is constructed. This does not disregard that differences between Russia and the West, which have long been formed through historical and political discourse, is important to understand Russian identity formation. In fact, as will become visible in the analysis of this thesis, the image of a Western Other is still prominent and maintained in Russian official discourse. Nevertheless, the collapse of the Soviet Union marked an end to the political communist project, and transformed *one* Self into *many* Others. Thus Russia's relations to countries perceived as politically, historically and culturally close to its Self are therefore just as important in post-Soviet Russian identity construction.

According to Neumann (1999), the 'making of selves is a narrative process of identification whereby a number of identities that have been negotiated in specific contexts are strung together into one overarching story' (218). So, the myth of the great past functions as the

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[7] See for example Ilya Prizle's (1998); Ted Hopf (2002); Ray Taras (2013); and Bo Petersson (2013).

narrative of the Self that legitimizes its existence. Thus, for a nation state to claim legitimacy, the origin of national consciousness should belong to that nation. For Russia, this is linked to its traditional role a a central power in a chain of supranational political structures. As Ilya Prizel (1998) argues, 'the ideal of Russia as a superior civilization and a transcendent empire with a universal mission has remained' (155). Thus, an important aspect of Russian identity construction is what Rob Walker (1993) calls the 'sense of what it is we are supposedly moving away from' (163), which is the idea of being a superior hegemon. Consequently, Ukraine and other post-Soviet countries are often represented as inferior to Russia. Thus, the idea of Ukraine as 'little Russia' has developed from conveying a sense uniqueness in the Russian imperial and the national project (Hillis, 2013), to a term that denotes an inferior, little brother (Kuzio, 2001, 2002, 2006).

The question of identity is therefore important for understanding conflict in post-Soviet space, as post-Soviet states must (re)construct the boundaries that constitute their ontological significance. As Neumann argues (1999), the capacity to recognise the Other as 'like' is tied to a 'certain external bodily similarity' (9). This thesis argues that interstate conflict in post-Soviet space increases when the Self and Other ambiguously overlap. For example, Russia and Ukraine share history, religion, language and political system. So, in order to be a sovereign state, they must construct a distinct national identity from each other. However, because of the shared similarities, struggles between identities increases. The Russian interference in post-Soviet countries, such as the military presence in Transnistria, the war with Georgia in 2008, and the annexation of Crimea in 2014 are examples of post-Soviet Russian identity struggle, which challenges commonly accepted concepts such as sovereignty and geographical borders in the socially constructed international system.

1.3 Thesis outline

This thesis continues with four chapters. In Chapter 2, the poststructural theoretical and methodological framework is accounted for, and the research design is developed.

Chapter 3 analyses Russian official discourse from the AA-suspension on November 20 to December 31, 2013. As will be discussed, the representations of Ukraine in this period is primarily articulated from an economic and a legal position, and Russia's emphasis on right to self-determination and respect for Ukraine's sovereignty dominates.

Chapter 4 will analyse Russian official discourse from January 2014 to the annexation of Crimea on March 18. The representations of Ukraine in this period changes drastically from the previous period, and negative representations of Ukrainian protesters dominates; however, degrees of otherness and various identity constructs will be discussed.

Chapter 5 will conclude the thesis by discussing the findings in chapter 3 and 4 in relation to each other and the research questions. It will also assess what impact possible changes might have for Russian Foreign policy and identity.

2. Theory, methodology and research design

For to challenge fixed conceptions of will, identity, responsibility, normality and punishment is to be cruel to people (and aspects of oneself) attached to established moral codes; it is to open up new uncertainties within established terms of judgement; and, sometimes it is to incite punitive reactions among those whose sense of moral self-assurance has been jeopardized.

- William Eugene Connolly (1993: 365).

This chapter will outline and discuss the theoretical and methodological framework in which this thesis operates, and develop the research design that undergirds builds the following analysis. I apply discourse analysis, which is a 'theoretical and methodological whole,' that cannot be detached from its theoretical framework (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 3-4). Thus, before presenting and discussing the research design and the application of discourse analysis as method, it is first necessary to map out the ontological and epistemological assumptions that make such an analysis possible. Section two discusses these in the context of IR before outlining the concepts that suit this study. Finally, I outline how the analysis is conducted, what and how texts are selected, and reflect on this study's limitations and validity.

I ground my theoretical framework in a poststructuralist tradition, and draw mostly on Marianne Winther Jørgensen and Louis Phillips (2002), Iver B. Neumann (1999, 2001, 2008) and Lene Hansen (2006, 2011), because they develop applicable theoretical and methodological frameworks suitable for this study. They base their theoretical understandings on Foucault, Derrida, Kristeva, Bakhtin, Laclau and Mouffe, to mention some. The former two develop a framework applicable to humanities, and the latter focus especially on international relations. I have also consulted the works of other IR-scholars of security who operates within a poststructuralist framework, such as Ole Wæver (2005), Rob Walker (1993) and David Campbell (1992), but to a lesser extent. My theoretical basis is thus based on secondary theorists, and the sources they draw upon are not visited here. This might be a weakness, as I then use interpretations of for example Michel Foucault instead of direct

references, which would allow for criticism of those sources. However, the authors used in this thesis have developed theoretical and methodological frameworks especially fit to conduct empirical research in the field of IR. It is thus my view that for a thesis like this, those voices are just as, if not more, useful.

2.1 Poststructuralism as point of departure

Ontology

A theory is developed to 'simplify and privilege certain aspects of the world' (Audie Klotz, 2008: 4), but in order to develop theories of the world, one must define what the world is. Or more precisely, what the world consists of (Neumann, 2001: 14). From a poststructural perspective this question is in itself ontologically problematic, because reality 'is unknowable outside human perception' (Dunn, 2008: 79). Thus, 'the objects of our knowledge are not objectively given, independent of our interpretations or language, but are products of our ways of categorizing the world' (Wilhelmsen, 2014a: 23). In other words, reality is only accessible through social interaction, where discursive practice create and recreate categories that construct this reality (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 5). It is only through language things receive meaning (L. Hansen, 2011: 170), and meanings are created through ceaseless struggles between different discourses to define those categories (Neumann, 2001: 21). Thus, we cannot perceive the objective truth of what the world *is*, as the components of 'the world' is only significant when we, through language, interpret it, and apply meaning to it (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 9).

Poststructuralism is therefore a branch of social constructivism, and both approaches departure from social and critical theories that emerged especially in France in the middle of the 20th century (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 4). Social constructivism view structures of the world as constructed socially and culturally within a historical context (Barnett, 2011: 150-152). However, poststructuralists view things as mutually constitutive. The premise is, that one part does not constitute the other, but they mutually constitute each other (Campbell, 1992: 60). A positivist cause-effect relationship is thus unhelpful to understand the social processes through which reality is constituted, because structures, such as the state system, cannot be independent

variables (L. Hansen, 2011: 168-169). A poststructural theory is therefore constitutive and not explanatory. Reality is perceived as anti-foundationalist, since everything depends on each other, and cannot be seen as isolated events. The ontological assumption of poststructuralism is therefore that everything is discourse (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 35).

To exemplify the difference between causal and non-causal theories, let us look at a concept important for the study of international relations; the state. From a positivist theorist's point of view, 'the state' is treated as an objective entity, with a fixed meaning, that can be observed as an independent variable, or dependent on another independent variable. The state's actions are thus governed by human nature (Morgenthau, 1973), the anarchical nature of the international system (Waltz, 1979), economic, cultural and political interdependence (Keohane & Nye, 1977), or it is used as a way to maintain the hegemonic power of the ruling class (Gramsci, 1999). The state is therefore observed as either causing something, or caused by something. Although poststructuralism also focus on how 'states' act within the international system, the theory disregards the causal assumption, which dramatically changes the premise for understanding political events. As Campbell (1992) argues, the 'state has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality' (10). The state cannot be observed as an independent variable or dependent on another independent variable, because it is only through discursive practice that states upholds their sovereign presence in the world.

This does not exclude the existence of a material world; however, this cannot be perceived objectively, nor observed outside of the social world (Neumann, 2001: 37). For example, we can assume that there is a non-social physical reality, regardless of humans, and we can create hypotheses, test them and observe the physical world. However, these observations cannot be done without the observer interpreting the observed. This interpretation is done through language as we explain the observation with already existing concepts, or concepts that are produced with basis in already existing concepts. Indeed, hypotheses are formulated through logical reasoning based on already produced knowledge. Humans constantly interpret and reinterpret reality, and in the process meaning is produced which contributes to this interpretation. Thus, there are no universal truth, as reality is only significant within discourse (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 14).

Epistemology

Thus, in order to study the world, one must study how we represent the world, and how discourses are constructed and represented. *Discourse* is here understood as a 'structure of words according to patterns used in different domains' that construct 'a particular way of talking about and understanding the world' (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 1). Or in Foucault's words, discourses are 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak (as cited in Neumann, 2001: 17). For this study, the 'object' is *Ukraine.* This is what Laclau and Mouffe calls 'nodal points,' a 'privileged sign from which other gets their meaning' (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 26). The practices that form the meaning of objects, such as *Ukraine,* is constructed through what Neumann (2001) calls 'representations' (33). This means that the things we observe as 'facts' and 'objects' are always represented through a filter of language, which can take different forms such as speech, writing, symbolism, actions and imagery to mention some. So the meaning of for example *Ukraine* is constructed through language, and language is the only way through which we can access it.

The focus on language means that we must pay attention to words, or *signs,* used in the process of representing something; however, a word does not really mean that much unless it position itself to other words to articulate a meaning (L. Hansen, 2011: 170). Thus, the constitution of reality is always a relational process (Neumann, 2001: 18), and the representation of something is shaped by the system in which signs are articulated. *Articulation* is therefore understood as 'every practice that establishes a relation between elements such that the identity of the elements is modified' (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 28). In other words, *Ukraine,* can be represented differently depending on the system in which signs are articulated. The implications is thus that the discourse on Ukraine consists of different signs that can construct various representations through the way it is articulated. This also implies an infinite amount of possibilities to articulate and represent an object, which is ontologically significant because it denotes that articulation is contingent, that is, neither impossible nor necessary (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 38).

This means that everything could have been different and can be different, however, this does not mean that nothing regulates discourse. The language through which the objects of the world are represented is also linked to the context in which the representation is done

(Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 6). So, that discourse is relational means not only that representations acquire meaning in relation to other representations, it also means that representations can *differ* from each other *differently* in various contexts. For example, if you suggest to have dog-meat for dinner in Norway, this would probably not be accepted. When 'dog' and 'dinner' is articulated together in the Norwegian context, it is often met with words like 'disgusting' and 'terrible.' This has to do with how the dog is perceived as a 'friend', and articulated with human characteristics such as 'affectionate' and 'intelligent.' However, in China, the idea of having dog-meat for dinner, might not necessarily produce a negative representation, because it is articulated differently. Thus, it is dog-meat can both be accepted and not accepted as dinner within different contexts. Although this is a simplified, non-empirical and stereotypical example, it exemplifies how context constraints the preconditions for action.

However, to understand how the present context constitute and constrain certain discursive possibilities, on must also understand how the context has been shaped through history (L. Hansen, 2011: 171). How has the present situation that makes certain events possible, been made possible? This is what Foucault called the history of the present, and is a method to study the constitutive processes in the world. Because poststructuralism views language as the only way to access reality, 'this mode of analysis asks how certain terms and concepts have historically functioned within discourse' (Campbell, 1992: 5). For example, Jens Bartelson has used this method to investigated how the meaning of *Sovereignty* (1995) and *Globalization* (2000) have been articulated over time. His interest is not what the concept *is,* but how it is altered through time, how it alters reality, and what possibilities this allows:

> Rather than starting from a fixed definition of a given concept, conceptual history attends to what the practices of definition and usage do to a concept, and what the concept in turn does to the world into which it is inscribed. Phrased differently, conceptual history attends both to what a concept means within a given context and to what a concept does to a given context. (Bartelson, 2000: 182).

This is important, firstly, because how *Ukraine* has been articulated impacts the context in which it is articulated. Thus, in order to study how Russian representations of Ukraine have affected its context, one must be aware of how the historical context has shaped the ways

Russia represents Ukraine. Secondly, it means that no event in history *had* to happen. For example, Russia's annexation of Crimea was not inevitable. Possible – but not necessary. This allows us to understand the outcomes that did not happen, but could have happened.

Because different understandings of the world creates different possible outcomes (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 6), the discourse is constrained by competing discourses (Torfing, 2005: 9). One nodal point, such as *Ukraine*, might be represented differently within Russian official discourse, for example, as 'friend' and 'enemy.' These representations oppose, and even exclude each other, and will make possible diametrically different actions. Thus a particular discourse, such as the Russian discourse on Ukraine, consist of many small discourses that construct a debate (L. Hansen, 2006: 51). These discourses contest what is to be perceived as the 'truth.' The constraints lie therefore in the differential aspect of the relational logic of discourse; Ukraine cannot be both the friend and the enemy, so in order to become the dominating representation, each representation must articulate the opposite as impossible, and thus exclude particular actions. Thus, the representations created by discursive practice constraints 'what is thought of at all, what is thought of as possible, and what is thought of as the "natural thing" to do in a given situation' (Neumann, 2008: 62). So, although there is more than one possible outcome, the discourse regulates the "bandwidth" of possible outcomes.

Discourse is therefore 'a decentred structure in which meaning is constantly negotiated and constructed' (Laclau, 1988: 254), and this allows for change to happen. What meanings we ascribe to certain things and words are always changing through discursive struggle, and these changes are simultaneously constituted by language. Thus, discourses are unstable, and how we perceive the world is constantly altered. A particular meaning can be experienced as fixed; however, this requires that the meaning is sedimented, and accepted as a fact through continuous representations by the majority of people within that context. Nevertheless, this can change through how articulations constantly reproduce, challenge or transform discourse within the context it operates (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 6, 10-11, 30). Language is thus always political, as it produce and reproduce particular representations, while other at the same time are excluded (L. Hansen, 2006: 18).

This implies that within language lies *power,* and because everything is contingent, power can be both reactionary and productive. For example, to uphold a fixed meaning of a 'fact' when everything is in flux requires a social consensus, which provides authority to those who voice that representation because it precludes alternatives (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 38; Neumann, 2001: 143). It, therefore, constitutes reality, because dominant discourses 'delegate what are considered as policy options' (Shapiro, Bonham, & Heradstveid, 1988: 398-399). In other words, power construct discourse, and it does so in a particular way (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 37).

Power is therefore interlinked with 'truth', 'authority' and 'knowledge' (L. Hansen, 2006: 55): Within knowledge lies power, because knowledge determines the truth. Knowledge, thus, produce authority because the knowledgeable can say what 'truth' is (L. Hansen, 2006: 66). This makes authority an act of differentiating, since to say what something is, is also to say what it is not. Hence, authority produce 'truth.' However, truth also produce authority because truth determines what knowledge is. Therefore, power lies within truth. The same reasoning can be done with all four phenomena as starting point, and this will always create a circle of interlinkage, because they are mutually constitutive (which makes it impossible that one of them 'really' is the starting point). Power, truth, authority and knowledge are thus imperative to the understanding of political actions, as they impact discursive battle between different political truths, which enables certain policies and thus exclude others (Bartelson, 1995: 4). Power, truth, authority and knowledge are, thus, key phenomena to scholars of international relations, whose analyses concern foreign policy, and are thus crucial in the study of Russia's annexation of Crimea.

2.2   Conceptual framework: A poststructural approach to IR-theory.

Foreign policy

According to Hansen (2006), theories of foreign policy deals with how 'states understand and respond to the world around them'; however, the ontological and epistemological base shapes how foreign policy is studied (17). Because the ontological assumption of poststructuralism is that everything is mutually constitutive, poststructuralism focuses neither on observable facts

nor on the true meaning behind structures (Torfing, 2005: 10). The focus is rather on investigating social structures that we take for granted, such as the state, are constituted through political processes, and the social consequences this produce (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 48). As mentioned earlier, this implies that states have no ontological truth, but should be understood as 'tenuously constituted in time (…) through a stylized repetition of acts' (Campbell, 1992: 10). Thus, foreign policy is a discursive practice.

Because poststructuralists understand foreign policy as a discursive practice, it can be conceptualised as relational, political and social, and can thus be viewed as 'a specific sort of boundary-producing political performance (Ashley, 1987: 51). A 'boundary' indicates a line, imagined or physical, between something and something else, and this differentiation constitutes identity. For a poststructuralist, then, the study of foreign policy is the study of identity, since 'foreign policies rely upon representations of identity, but it is also through the formulation of foreign policy that identities are produced and reproduced' (L. Hansen, 2006: 1). This implies that poststructuralists conceptualise identity and policy as ontologically inseparable, which means that identity also is conceptualised as discursive, political, relational and social (L. Hansen, 2006: 2, 27).

Identity

This thesis draw upon the poststructural conception of identities as always relational. Conceptualisation of identity in relational terms means that identity is constructed in two dimensions – what it is, and what it is not (L. Hansen, 2006: 19), thus, identity is constructed in the process of differentiation between two or more subjects (Neumann, 1999: 208). Echoing Richard Ashley's understanding of foreign policy as boundary-producing, David Campbell (1992) asserts that identity is constituted 'through the inscription of boundaries that serve to demarcate an 'Inside' from an 'Outside', a 'Self' from an 'Other', a 'Domestic' from a 'Foreign' (9). He suggests that a state's identity inside borderlines are secured by identification of danger outside, for example when the fear of terrorism will urge the nation to dissociate with the 'terrorists', and thus reconstruct its self in the process of differentiating from the other (Ibid.: 3). Thus, external factors urge the reconstruction of identity. However, as Ole Wæver (1996) argues, identity must not necessarily be constructed through an external other, but also

through internal Others, such as in the case of the European union, which is shaped by the European idea of not returning to its own past (122).

Identity is not only created through the process of differentiating, but also through the process of linking. Thus, for a particular common identity to exist it must be imagined by a group of individuals inside as well as a group outside (R. Walker, 1993) This is what Benedict Anderson (2006) calls an imagined community, which is the construction of a sense of belonging, where individuals identify themselves within categories or groups. For example, a national consciousness can only exist when a group of people, that see themselves as members of that group, accepts and maintains common assumptions (Lane, 2011: 925). However, the individual experience of identity cannot exist within itself; if the Other does not exist, then the Self cannot exist and vice versa, which also denotes that if the Self exist, the Other must also exist. The 'individual', thus, maintains ontological significance through discursive practice, which constitute a 'we' and a 'them' (Neumann, 2001: 94). Overall, a Self can be constituted through many Others and many Selves (Hopf, 2002, p. 263). This indicates, that identity is not only constructed through a external Other, or a negative Other, but through degrees of otherness, which allows for positive others and negative selves (L. Hansen, 2006: 37).

The boundary between the Self and the Other is therefore never completely fixed, and produce a struggle over what and who are included and excluded (Torfing, 2005: 16). Thus, the existential threat to the Self *and* the Other intensifies when they become similar, meaning that the line between them becomes uncertain and blurry. In order to maintain stability, the Other is constructed as radically different to legitimise the existence of Self which makes possible extreme measures to defend the Self and maintain security (Wilhelmsen, 2014a: 18). Therefore, the argument proposed in this thesis is based on the assumption that instability occurs when the radical other is constructed as Self (L. Hansen, 2006: 44), which indicates that instability simultaneously occur when the Self is constructed as a radical Other. This means that, situations in which extreme measures are made possible, is constructed when the degree of otherness is weak, which construct the Self and the Other so similar that their existential is threatened. Therefore, for something to be constructed as a radical Other, it must also be constructed as Self.

2.3 Methodology: Why discourse analysis?

This ambiguity has several theoretical and methodological implications, which makes poststructuralism a suitable theoretical framework to study how the Russian annexation of Crimea was made possible. Theoretically, something can become the radical Other – that which threatens the existence of Self – when it is ambiguously connected to representation of the Self. It is through this ambiguous discursive practice that extreme measures are made possible, as these measures seek to stabilise discourse for example by reconstructing a line or construct a new line. Methodologically, the focus of study should thus be on 'how discourses seeks to construct stability, where they become unstable, how they can be deconstructed, and the process through which they change' (L. Hansen, 2006: 44-45). For this particular case then, to analyse how the Russian annexation of Crimea was made possible is to study how Russian representation of Ukraine in relation to Self has made the annexation of Crimea a possible political action.

The way to do so is to identify the line between them, and how this is maintained (Neumann, 1999, 36). Discourse analysis is therefore a suitable method of data analysis, because it is used to analyse how social practices is constrained and constituted through the discursive practice that produce meaning. According to Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) '[t]he aim of discourse analysis it to map out the processes in which we struggle about the way in which the meaning of signs is to be fixed, and the processes of which some fixations of meaning become so conventionalised that we think of them as natural' (25-26). We can therefore study this issue through discourse analysis 'by highlighting its relationalist, contextual, and ultimately historicist view of identity formation' (Torfing, 2005: 14). The following section will operationalise these concepts, to create a research design that makes such an analysis possible.

2.4 Discourse analysis as method: Developing a research design

Before moving into the choices made in this analysis, it is necessary to return to the research questions for a brief moment, which are as follows:

- *How have Russia's representations of 'Ukraine' from the suspension of the AA on November 20, 2013 to the annexation of Crimea on March 18, 2014, affected/made possible Russia's annexation of Crimea?*
- *In what ways have the re-articulation of Ukraine affected Russia's image of 'Self' and its perceived place in the World?*
- *What implications does this have for future Russian-Ukrainian relations?*

The aim of this study is thus not to unmask the 'truth' of reality, but to analyse how Russia's representation of the 'other' during the conflict has made possible the breach of the principle of sovereignty, by annexing another Sovereign state's territory. An investigation of such question will also provide an analysis of Russian identity formation in the national state-system, and the fluidity and unfixed 'truths'-concepts such as *Sovereignty* and *Nation-state*. What 'Russia' and 'Ukraine' means is also changing, and it is this change that the methodological design attempts to illuminate.

Conceptualising foreign policy discourse

To investigate how the Russian annexation of Crimea was made possible, the analysis should focus on the discourse through which this was constituted. Because '[o]fficial foreign policy discourse is the discourse through which state action is legitimised (Hansen, 2006: 59-60), the focus here is on Russian foreign policy discourse. However, poststructuralist conceptualise foreign policy and identity as ontologically inseparable, which has implications for how foreign policy discourse is conceptualised, because the lack of an independent variable makes it impossible to say which of identity and foreign policy that causes the other (Ibid.: 18). Hansen (2006) suggests, therefore, the method of combinability, which means that when the link between identity and foreign policy is instable or uncertain, 'there will be an attempt to make an adjustment to recreate stability through modification of either the construction of identity or the proposed policy' (29). In other words, an imbalance between foreign policy and identity, which can produce articulations that reproduce, challenge or transform discourse, can be detected within discourse that concern foreign policy issues and questions of identity.

Text selection and delineation

The most important underlying principle which determines the validity of this thesis is whether it captures what it sets out to capture (Repstad, 2007: 134). It should be a clear link between the research questions proposed, and the information used to answer them, and the conclusion should emerge from evidence and logical argumentation (Jackson, 2011: 22). The research questions and methodology applied to answer them are previously accounted for. However, there are other limitations and challenges that impacts the analysis. For this particular study, limitations are first and foremost encountered through text selections, delineation, and scope.

I follow Hansen's (2006) model 1 of intertextuality, which 'is directly based in official foreign policy discourse and centres on political leaders with official authority to sanction the foreign policies pursued' (60). These can be single-authored, such as speeches, articles and books; or through dialogue, such as interviews or debates (Ibid.). Although Hansen suggests four models, one which includes a wider debate (model 2), popular culture (model 3A) and marginal political discourse (model 3B), I will for the most part stick to model 1. This is mainly because of the scope of this thesis, and is therefore more a choice of narrowing down the workload, although a study which includes more or all models would have a stronger foundation to conclude about discursive stability (L. Hansen, 2006: 74). However, the official politics needs to please a range of discourses and at the same time maintain legitimacy, so to only stick with official discourse makes it possible to detect the discursive influence that texts from other models might have (Ibid.).

In addition, because both the political debate and most of the media in which these political debate is stages and made accessible to people, are state-controlled, these are often based on the official discourse that comes from President Putin directly. I therefore focus on official speeches, press statements, press conferences, parliament declarations, articles, interviews and debates from Putin, his office, and his press spokesmen, prime minister Medvedev and his office, or minister of foreign affairs Lavrov and his office. I include the latter two to widen the scope of analysis, because they all possess authority and their opinions and statements are widely accessed by Russians and the rest of the world. In addition, the scope is further expanded through intertextual references; such as references to international law, policies of CIS and OSCE, historical events and fictional literature, to mention some.

These sources are mostly available online, in both English and Russian. The texts by Russian officials can be accessed through the Russian government's own web pages, and much of it is translated to English. I read most of the texts in English, but because I am familiar with the Russian language I also read some of the texts in Russian. This is firstly to make sure that important aspects are not lost in translation, such as certain cultural and historical references and phrases (Neumann, 2008: 63), and secondly, because not everything is translated. Most of the political documents of transnational organisations are available online in many languages, and some Russian news agencies, such as RT and Sputnik are online based, and operates in English and in Russian. Although state-owned channels such as Rossiya-1 and Perviy Kanal were the most important source of information for the Russian public during the annexation (Teper, 2015: 2), they are not included here, because these are only accessible in Russian, which would generate time consuming translation work and thus limit the amount of texts included in this analysis.

The next choice to make are thus to choose which time frame to operate within; and because Russia officially annexed Crimea on march 18, 2014[8], the question is thus how far back in time the analysis should reach. Because the struggle between discourses intensifies with uncertainty, the focus should be on conflict (Neumann, 2008: 66), and a conflict intensifies with a moment of 'intense political concern' (L. Hansen, 2006: 78). The annexation of Crime is in itself such a moment, but the conflict leading up to it are here viewed as ignited when the Russian government suspended the free trade agreement with EU on November 20, 2013. This is a period of approximately four months, and because this study only includes model 1 texts, it is manageable to go through most of the official discourse concerning the situation in Ukraine within the period defined.

In order to detect change within the discourse through this period, I have subdivided the moment of conflict into two periods. The first period concerns the time just before and in the close aftermath of the suspension of AA, which here is restricted from November 20 to December 31, 2013. This period is selected because the discourse up until then addresses the

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[8] A short explanation of this

AA-suspension and its ramifications, and is not that concerned with the situation on Maidan. However, there is a marked shift in the articulation of the demonstrators on Maidan, especially at the end of January 2014. The second period, therefore, concerns the discourse from January 1, until the annexation on March 18, 2014. A division into these two periods enables a comparison between the representations of Ukraine, which can discover, and categorise, change.

This is not without challenges, because to limit the discourse to a short time period will not give insight into how the representation of Ukraine within Russian discourse have developed through history, and how the annexation fits into that. However, this context is provided by drawing on other studies conducted on Russian identity/foreign policy and *Ukraine* in Russian identity formation, which are reviewed in the introduction.

Reading and mapping texts

Now that the case is made for what texts to use and how to structure them, the question is how to *read* them in order to answer the research questions set out. According to Ole Wæver (2005) the main focus of investigation should be on '*how* the text argues, not *what* it says' (41). So, to refer back to the epistemological account, the focus should lie on the meanings articulated by linking words with one another, and what meanings they potentially exclude, to identify what discourse(s) they draw on and reproduce (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 29). Hansen (2006) suggests three analytical concerns that serves to guide the analysis: 'which selves and others are constituted in foreign policy discourse? How radical is the difference between them? And how is difference constituted through articulation of spatial, temporal and ethical identity?' (50). Thus, two techniques are applied here, as described by Hansen (2006); linking and differentiating through the analytical lenses of spatial, temporal and ethical construction; intertextual reading, and the history of the present.

Because we understand identity as produced through linking and differentiating, the key is to identify 'those terms that indicate a clear construction of the Other (…) or of the Self' (L. Hansen, 2006: 41-42). These are connected, and must therefore be analysed in context of what the identity produced by linking is juxtaposed to, as 'the internal other and the external other compound one another, and both of these seep into the definition given to the other within the

interior of the self' (Connolly, 1989: 326). For example, Russia might be linked to 'rational' and 'honest,' which provides meaning when it is differentiated with an Other, such as Ukraine, who might be 'irrational' and 'unlawful'. However, as Hansen goes on to argue, the Other might be constructed in several ways, and competing discourses might construct different representations of identity within one discourse. For example, in Russian official discourse, Ukrainians can be represented both as 'out of control' and acting as a 'mob,' while simultaneously be represented as 'lawful' and 'friendly'. Thus, competing discourse about the representations can be identified, and when examined across a period of time, it might be possible to detect when one discourse assumes domination, which would open up for a new set of political outcomes. This would include degrees of otherness and different selves (Wæver, 2005: 38).

Another important aspect when linking and differentiating is the consideration of how identity is constructed through what Hansen (2006) calls spatial, temporal and ethical contexts; which roughly speaking concerns space, time and responsibility. The reason we must consider this, is that these metaphors are built into language and are therefore impossible to escape (Neumann, 2001: 43-45). The first dimension through which one can understand identity is the spatial, which means the construction of boundaries (Ibid., 47). For example, the state is spatially defined through clear delineation, and how it is delineated may vary over time (I. B. Neumann, 2015: 47). For example, in this particular study, the configuration of space, such as 'Crimea,' 'Ukraine' and 'Russia' are central to understanding how new boundaries emerged. However, these spaces can also be abstract, such as 'Russians,' which can be cross the imagined state-borders, and construct a simultaneously existing space, such as *Russkiy mir* (the Russian world). Such categories also construct boundaries, because it produces what it is and what it is not through the meanings applied to it.

The second dimension is the temporal construction, through which notions of 'progress' and 'intransigence' are explored (L. Hansen, 2006: 48), and this has implications for policy choice. For example, two temporal identities of Ukrainians represented in Russian official discourse can be on the one hand 'mob,' 'pogrom' and 'fascists;' and on the other 'people,' 'peaceful protesters,' and 'democrats.' This produce different possibilities of how to treat Ukrainians, because the former representation awakes a sense of intransigency that cannot develop, but

must be stopped. A second example of temporal identity-construction is the Russian representation of Ukraine as moving towards the West, and thus moves away from the Russian Self. This can also be viewed in a historical context, where the Self moves away from its own identity in a different temporal space, which is what Rob Walker (1993) calls identity construction through the sense of 'what it is we are supposedly moving away from' (p. 163).

The final dimension is the ethical, which does not mean that the analyst should assess whether discursive practice is ethical or not, but to take into account the constructions of ethics, morality and responsibility in relation to identity (L. Hansen, 2006: 50). For example, the 'Rosskiy mir' spatial dimension is often linked to 'Russia's' ethical responsibility 'to defend Russians.' This can again be linked to humanitarian- and international law-discourse and the 'responsibility to protect.' Such a construction therefore produces a possibility to act politically to 'protect' the 'Rosskiy mir.' This dimension therefore produce authority, because to constitute something as ethical, includes the authority to speak about a certain responsibility (Ibid.). The authority to speak about issues can formally be posited in social institutions and structures, and through the reference to knowledge of that issue (Ibid.: 7).

This introduce intertextuality, which is the second technique applied as an analytic tool in this thesis, and can be understood as the way in which a text's meaning is the product of other texts (L. Hansen, 2006: 55). Thus, a text does not have meaning in itself, but must be understood as constituted within the context of other texts, and one can therefore detect implicit or explicit reference (Ibid. 56). Intertextuality does not only apply to literature, but can also be applied to all discursive practice For example, when military troops without insignia appeared in Crimea on February 28, 2014, this event acquired meaning through intertextual reference, and the context in which it was represented (Carbonelle & Prentice, 2014). Ukrainian officials and Western commentators speculated about them being Russian soldiers, and Russia officially denied this. Thus, it was an uncertainty about which of the stories to believe in (Galeotti, 2015: 159). Regardless of whether or not Russia lied, the uncertainty led to a new representation of these unidentified soldiers that started to dominate among Ukrainian and Western commentators: They were called 'little green men.' The same label has often been used to describe stereotypical aliens, which will invoke certain associations; for example, aliens are

not from the planet earth,[9] so to give the military such a name suggests that they are not regarded as 'of us.' The term therefore carries intertextual reference that can be traced back in literature and imagery in popular culture, and construct an identity.

However, no meaning can be fixed, so intertextuality also includes an element of producing new meaning to the reference itself. By applying the phrase 'little green men' in the context of the annexation of Crimea, the term has thus acquired a new meaning which connects the term to the Russian military. This can be viewed in the way later references to 'little green men' has been used in reference to Russia. For example, the same term has been used in Western media, in connection to Russian military troops in Syria (Khalaf, 2015). It is unlikely that Russian troops in Syria would have been called 'little green men' if the term was not made possible in the context of the annexation of Crimea. Thus, this term carries a memory of the context in which it was coined, and how we understand 'little green men' in Syria is linked to how we understand 'little green men' in Ukraine, but continues to construct the meaning of 'little green men' in a Russian military context.

With these analytical tools at hand, the analysis presented in the following chapters are conducted through identification of the representations, which is what Hansen (2006) calls the discourses within discourse, and apply the analytical tools to identify how these representations are articulated which construct different positions (Neumann, 2001: 33). Discursive struggle occurs on all levels. For example, Crimea can be represented as 'belonging to Russia' or 'belonging to Ukraine,' which (re)produce two positions that are articulated differently, argued through representations such as history, sovereignty and culture, and produce different policies. If the latter dominates and is constantly being re-presented, then that becomes the accepted 'truth' that produces policies, that reproduce this dominant position. However, this struggle with another leading position within a different discourse, for example on 'Sovereignty,' or 'humanitarian law.' A second point to keep in mind then, is that certain representations might not be visible. This can mean that those representations might not need explanation within that discourse because it is thoroughly established and accepted. It can also be that something is not even considered as significant, such as a third position on 'who owns

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[9] ...or maybe they are – constructed through discourse, that is.

Crimea'-issue, in which the position that it 'belongs to Tatars' is difficult to trace in Russian official discourse. This can tell us a whole deal about the political and social consequences, just as radicalisation does. But, before we move on to the analysis, it is necessary to make some remarks on reliability and bias.

Reliability

Reliability of a discourse analysis is the question of whether other analysts would come to the similar conclusions when reading the same texts (L. Hansen, 2006: 45). This depends on how precise the method is, how precise the information used is, and whether the analysis is conducted without mistakes and shortcomings (Repstad, 2007: 134). The texts analysed in this thesis are all available to the public, and no personal interviews and observations that cannot be revisited by others are conducted. Thus, the data can be reconstructed, read and assessed by others, which is a feature that strengthens the reliability of discourse analysis as a research method. However, this does not secure that other analysts would come to similar conclusion, as readings of the same texts, with the same methodological framework and tools might be of different quality. Thus, a reliable research does not preclude a weak reading. Nevertheless, the researcher's goal should be to produce something that is verifiable (Neumann, 2001: 89), which in itself is a sign of reliability.

However, this thus not exonerate discourse analysis of a reliability problem as the researcher is in herself a question of reliability. A problem with poststructuralism is that texts can be read and interpreted in multiple ways from different angles, with various approaches (L. Hansen, 2006: 45). First of all, each analyst possesses a set of values, comes from different backgrounds and hold various experiences, which inevitably will shape their interpretations. Even if you look for the same things while analysing a speech by Putin, your level of knowledge, background, and personal opinion will to some extent influence the interpretation of that speech. Secondly, the context in which texts are interpreted also influence how they are read. The same speech by Putin can therefore be interpreted differently with various temporal and spatial circumstances. The researcher's job then, is to reflect on, and report everything that might create a bias, so that reliability can be assessed by other analysts with these perspectives in mind.

Reflections on 'I': Bias and ethics

After months of working on this thesis, a moment of short-sightedness made me very aware of my own personal bias. While looking at a map of 'new states of the former Soviet Union' in Pål Kolstø's (2000: 3) monograph on nation-building in Russia and post-Soviet states, I could only count fourteen, and not fifteen 'new' states. It took me several minutes to realise that I did not count Russia. However embarrassing this might be for someone who has lived in Russia and studied Russian, it indicates how strong the idea of 'Russia' is. Nevertheless, what is now regarded as 'Russia' is not identical with what Russia has meant in the past. The Russian Federation is a significantly smaller country now then what the Russian empire or the Soviet Union were; and it is, at least de jure, a semi-presidential democracy with a liberal market economy, something that sharply contrast a tsarist autocracy or a one-party communist system with a plan economy. Even if Putin's regime is arguably similar to a one-party, tsarist autocracy (Clowes, 2011: 3; Hem, 2015; Motyl, 2016), the primordial idea of 'Russia' as a constant unit with a fixed set of traits and features naturally inclined to 'Russianness,' is not an objective truth. Nevertheless, this idea of a fixed Russian identity has dominated the discursive context through which Russia came into my consciousness.

Consequently, I easily, and often unconsciously, place myself in the category 'We' meaning the West, and thus categorise Russia as 'they.' Even with a researcher's desired objective point of view and with a critical and conscious wish not to reproduce Eurocentrism, it is impossible to escape the historical and contemporary social context from which I perceive reality (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 49). The meaning of concepts, words, ideas and structures are (re)produced through discursive practice and draws on already developed concepts, words, ideas and structures. So, even if I possess knowledge about Russian history, culture and language, or 'cultural competence,' as Neumann (2008: 63) calls it, I am part of a discourse in which certain accepted 'truths' dominate, such as the notion of a collective Western identity that stands in stark contrast to the Russian identity. How I perceive Russia is therefore inevitably shaped by this.

This means, that I cannot completely step out of the context and view the issue from a purely objective and unbiased perspective (Dunn, 2008: 79, 91). I am, as everybody else, part of a social sphere in which meaning and knowledge is produced through discursive practice. I am

thus not only shaped by the discursive practice; I also participate in its (re)production of meaning (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 22). My research draws on a body of literature, and the way I perceive concepts, words, ideas and structures all derives from these sources. I therefore continue, and hopefully add to or develop, an already produced set of knowledge. This, however, does not indicate that such a continuation of a perceived reality should stand unchallenged. Even though, as Ted Hopf (2002) writes it; 'authors do not control the meaning of their own words once they are uttered in public' (20), I have a responsibility to critically approach how I perceive reality; not only because I am myself shaped by discursive practices, but also because what I produce contribute to this shaping of reality (I. B. Neumann, 1999: 36).

A study of Self/Other contributes to the constitution of division between Self and Other, because it constantly refers to separate units as different from each other. Neumann (1999) has pointed out, that '[a]nalyses of collective identity formation should contribute, however timidly, to our living in difference and not to some of us dying from otherness' (37). Although this thesis might be of little significance, it is still likely to be read at least by students writing at the same level and on the same topic. Thus, my interpretation of Russian official discourse might be read and interpreted by someone producing research in the same field. Thus, my task is not to identify and determine differences between Self and Other as this would contribute to active differentiation for that purpose. An approach like that requires a different ontological starting point, which requires a fixed, objective difference. My task is to look at *how* 'truths' about such differences comes into being, which will make possible a critical take on how something becomes accepted as truth at the expenses of something else (Dunn, 2008: 81).

But, can one be critical without accepting an idea of what is right and what is wrong (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 22)? The answer is probably no, and that is linked to the point made above, that I am myself always part of a 'a particular discourse that provides us with a set of relatively determinate values, standards, and criteria for judging something to be true or false, right or wrong, good or bad' (Torfing, 2005: 19). However, since the purpose of a discourse analysis is to investigate *how* something is made possible, the point is not to comment on what is wrong or not. The point is that, in any given situation, the outcome could have been something else

(Wilhelmsen, 2014a: 6). Thus, to identify how a certain outcome, such as the annexation of Crimea, where made possible, also identifies how other outcomes could similarly have been made possible (Neumann, 2008: 62-63). That which happens is never inevitable. Ergo, there are always several possible ways to articulate and interpret reality. We must therefore, regardless of what we assume is right and wrong, always keep in mind that no outcome should be taken for granted (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 48).

2.5   Chapter conclusion

This chapter has discussed the theoretical and methodological framework that guides this analysis. From a poststructural point of departure, I have developed a research design that aims to illuminate how the Russian annexation of Crimea was made possible. The thesis will therefore continue with an analysis of how Russia's representation of the Other during the conflict has made possible the annexation of another Sovereign state's territory. This will allow for a broader discussion on Russian identity formation and foreign policy.

3. The AA-suspension's aftermath: From *strategic partner* to *fraternal brother*

This chapter presents an analysis of the Russian official response to the AA-suspension and to its repercussions, from November 20 to December 31, 2013. As will be discussed, the representations of Ukraine in this period is primarily articulated within an economic and a legal framework, and Russia's emphasis on right to self-determination and respect for Ukraine's sovereignty dominates. However, as will be argued, several representations of Ukraine create various ethical dimensions of Russian identity, and uncertainty in Russia's representations of Ukraine is visible. It is through this uncertainty that the dominating representation of Ukraine as Russia's strategic *partner* is gradually challenged by the representation of Ukraine as Russia's strategic *friend.* This makes possible a change in Russian economic policy towards Ukraine, and a sense of reconciliation emerges in mid-December. In addition, the anti-Western discourse increases, and the West is constructed as Russia's main Other.

The chapter begins with a discussion on the choices made with regards to selected texts and time frame. It also gives a brief outline of the context, and makes a point about how Russian and Western political leaders react differently to the emerging crisis. The analysis is divided into two subchapters. The first deals with the representations of Ukraine through an 'economic position,' and the other through a 'legal position.' Although the emphasis on Ukraine's national sovereignty is closely connected to the economic position, and the pragmatic focus on economy is interlinked with the legal framework that regulates it, I have chosen to present them under different subheadings. This is done because they construct slightly different ethical, spatial and temporal identities, and because the economic position, which dominates in this period, almost disappear in the next period. However, they constantly overlap, and the chapter structure is not an attempt to finalise or fix boundaries within the discourse.

3.1 Introduction

Time frame and texts

The following chapter's analysis includes official discourse from when Ukraine announced they would suspend negotiations with the EU on November 20, to Putin's New Year speech on December 31, 2013. This is done for several reasons. Firstly, the Ukraine crisis began when the Ukrainian government suspended negotiations on the Association Agreement (AA) and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) with the EU on November 20, 2013. This is what Hansen (2006) calls a key event, which is a 'situations in which "important facts" manifest themselves on the political and/or the media agenda and (…) force the official discourse to engage with political opposition and media criticism' (31). Thus, an event such as the suspension of AA generates debate and is therefore important for understanding how the situation on Crimea emerged.

Secondly, it is also appropriate to begin here because the response and media focus, especially among Western and Ukrainian oppositional media, called for Russian officials to respond. The suspension occurred a week before the planned signing of AA and DCFTA at the Eastern Partnership summit in Vilnius, and the suspension was signed by Prime Minister Mykolo Azarov the same day he met with Russian Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev in conjunction with the Council of CIS Heads of State in St. Petersburg. A decree issued by the Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers claimed that to ensure national and economic security, the AA-process had to be slowed down so that Ukraine could 'restore trade and economic relation with Russia, and other countries' (Кабінет Міністрів України, 2013). It called for at trilateral commission between Ukraine, the EU and the Russian Federation, to 'elaborate a range of issues' (Ibid.). Eurasian projects such as the Customs Union (CU) and the Commonwealth of States (CIS), were mentioned as important for Ukraine's future focus. Thus, according to the Ukrainian government, the signing of a free trade agreement between Ukraine and the EU was stalled to ensure economic ties with Russia. Russia was thus in the centre of attention, and had to engage in the emerging debate concerning its own agenda, and the 'truth' about the situation.

Finally, in order to say something about how Russia's official narrative about the AA-suspension was stabilised, it is necessary to include discourse beyond the immediate aftermath. Therefore, this chapter includes discourse until December 31. This is particularly useful

because there is a tradition to sum up Russia's political status towards the end of each year on different platforms where politicians engage with both domestic and foreign journalists. For example, the President's address to the assembly, the President's yearly news conference with domestic and international press, and the traditional hour-long conversation with the Prime Minister and a panel of Russian journalists are such events. The inclusion of these texts, makes it possible to illuminate the continuities and slight changes in how both the AA-suspension and Ukraine is represented and re-presented in response to oppositional and similar representations in the first stage of the Ukraine crisis.

The body of texts that underpins the following analysis includes therefore the Russian official immediate response, as well as material where these are repeated and altered. These include speeches, interviews, statements and press conferences with President Vladimir Putin, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergey Lavrov, and other relevant official representatives, in addition to more general statements from Kremlin. Both the comments made immediately after the AA-suspension, as well as the mentioned speeches and news conferences towards the end of each year were broadcasted and reported on through several Russian media platforms, and they therefore reached a broad Russian audience.

Crisis or not a crisis?

Before moving into the analysis, it is necessary to pause for a moment and reflect on the context in which Russia's discourse on the AA-suspension emerged. The first point I want to make, is that the Russian response to the turn of events, although similar to that of the Yushchenko government, stands in stark contrast to the responses by Ukrainian opposition and Western leaders. The latter claimed that this was the work of Russia, and not according to the will of the people (Ashton, 2013; European Council, 2013; NATO, 2013; Psaki, 2013). The faction leader of Yulia Tymoshenko's party Batkivshchyna (All-Ukrainian Union 'Fatherland'), and later Prime Minister of Ukraine, Arseniy Yatsenyuk (2013), called for demonstrations against the government in a Twitter post, and coined the term #Euromaidan. The leader of the far-right party Svoboda (Freedom), Oleh Tyahniboh was reported to have said that '[t]oday we are giving our answer to Moscow (...) Let them see that they cannot build a "Russian world" here. They are not going to have Ukrainian leaders in their pockets and under their control' (Balmforth, 2013). The opposition thus, signalled that 'the people' of

Ukraine where not represented by Yushchenko's government. This resonated strongly among Ukraine supporters of AA, thousands of which went out in the streets to demonstrate (BBC, 2013). Contrastingly, two days after the suspension of AA, Putin (2013a) claimed that he only heard the news 'yesterday,' and he blamed the unrest on 'what essentially amounts to threats from our European partners, even as far as helping to organise mass protests.' A polarised understanding of the suspension of the AA was thus visible from the start.

This is important, because in contrast to European and Ukrainian oppositional leaders, who shortly after explicitly voiced their view on the situation, and even physically appeared on the Maidan together with demonstrators, the Russian official reaction remained sparse for several weeks. For example, it was only commented on by Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov (2013) November 21, the day after; and Putin, Lavrov and Medvedev only commented on it when asked explicitly during press events the following weeks. The situation in Ukraine was not even mentioned in Lavrov's (2013c) speech at the plenary session of the OSCE Foreign Ministers Council in Kiev, on December 5. Among the protocolled statements by delegations at the same council, delegations from both the EU and the U.S. has mentioned the situation in Ukraine; the EU's opening statement called it a 'political crisis' and asserted that Ukraine experienced 'challenging times'; while the U.S. stated that they stood 'by the people of Ukraine and their aspirations for a European future with freedom, opportunity and prosperity' (OSCE, 2013: 43, 49). Contrastingly, the Russian statement did not mention the situation, just that Ukraine had successfully chaired the 20th OSCE Ministrial Council, and that they in that context had 'genuinely strived to act as an "honest broker"' (Ibid.: 51). When confronted by this in a press conference later that day, Lavrov (2013b) answered that '[t]he statements regarding Ukraine does not fit into the agenda.' Thus, the situation was dealt with differently by Russian and Western leaders.

The situation in Ukraine was only mentioned indirectly in speeches by Putin, Lavrov and Medvedev the following weeks after the AA-suspension unless journalists asked direct questions about it, and it is not until the annual Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly on December 12, that the situation in Ukraine is mentioned unsolicited in a speech (Putin, 2013f). From then on, Ukraine is included more often in speeches, for example by Lavrov (2013f) after a meeting with the EU member-states and the High Representative of the Union

for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy for the European Union and Vice-President of the European Commission Catherine Ashton on December 16. This coincides with how the situation develops in Kiev, with increasing amount of demonstrators, and clashes between them and the police. In fact, it is only referred to as a 'situation' until Lavrov (2013h) calls it a 'crisis' in a press conference following a meeting in Poland on December 19, and again on January 21, 2014, when he calls it 'the Ukrainian crisis' (Lavrov, 2014b). In other words, it seems as if Russia officially does not acknowledge that the situation in Ukraine is a crisis, and other foreign- and domestic issues dominates the official discourse, such as Iran's Nuclear Program (INP), the situation in Syria, and the devastating floods in the Far East.

I will not attempt to embark on an explanation of why this is so, many factors can be taken into account and explain this, such as political strategy, belief in that this will calm down, that they do not see it as a crisis, or other plausible reasons. My point is merely that Russia's official approach changes as competing discourses challenges this approach to such an extent that Kremlin cannot exclude it, and this happens sometime in mid-December, around the time of the Russian-Ukrainian Interstate Commission. This coincides with yet another change; the representation of Ukraine shifts from 'partner' or 'strategic partner' to 'friend' – or 'strategic friend.' These two shifts in tone will be discussed in the following analysis.

3.2   'It is a pragmatic matter, an economic issue'

The 'economic position,' as I call it, is the dominating position through which Russian official discourse represents 'Ukraine' in the aftermath of the AA-suspension. It is expressed as an explanation for why the situation has emerged, why Ukraine has decided to suspend the agreement, and what Russia's role in the situation is. Various versions of this explanation are repeated several times in November and December (Lavrov, 2013b, 2013e, 2013f, 2013i; Medvedev, 2013a, 2013b; Peskov, 2013; Putin, 2013g, 2013h, 2013i, 2013j, 2013b, 2013c, 2013f; Russian MFA, 2013), and it is a clear consensus in the Russian official discourse that the situation in Ukraine at this time, as exemplified by Putin (2013a), 'is not a political issue. It is a pragmatic matter, an economic issue.' Words such as 'trade,' 'economy,' 'cooperation,' 'partner,' 'trilateral,' 'CIS,' and 'CU' are repeated in conjunction with 'Ukraine,' and this

position is first expressed by Putin (Ibid.) in a press conference following a meeting with the Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan on November 22, after a question from a journalist:

> Russia and Ukraine have an agreement on a free trade zone. This means that many goods that are sensitive for our countries are exempted from export and import duties. We have a completely different level of customs protection in our relations with our partners from the European Union (...) Now, if Ukraine signs a free trade agreement with the European Union and reduces customs duties to zero, if we keep the free trade zone that we have with Ukraine, this customs regime will automatically extend to our customs territory too. We think that this could be ruinous for an entire sector of our economy. If Ukraine has zero-rate duties with the EU (…) this would all come flowing into our customs territory too. But our economy would not be able to bear this, not yet at any rate.

The important aspect here is not *what* this explanation argue, but *how* it argues. As shown in the quote above, there are temporal, ethical and spatial dimension to how 'Ukraine' is represented by this position, which also impact the way Russia and EU is represented. These aspects will now be discussed in detail, and although they overlap, I have tried to structure the following section by each dimension starting with the temporal.

Representing Ukraine: A strategic partner

There are several temporal aspects of the economic position that represents 'Ukraine' as a country in deep economic trouble that are not at the level of European economy, and thus not ready for European integration the way the EU suggests. For example, it was repeated, and emphasised, that Ukraine suspended, and not stopped the AA-agreement, but just took a break (Putin, 2013a; Russian MFA, 2014g). According to Lavrov (2013i), accession into a free trade zone with EU would 'be sufficiently detrimental for the Ukrainian economics.' He also commented that Ukraine 'decided not to sign an agreement, which Ukrainian experts and authorities considered unfavourable for the country, at this stage' (Lavrov, 2013b). 'Ukraine' is here represented as a country in progress, but this progress should not be rushed, since the EU-deal is not suited for Ukraine's economic reality at this moment. This, however, does not exclude a possible future development towards deeper economic ties with the EU. However, Lavrov (2013b) explained, that such a process had to be 'slowed down.' In other words, one temporal aspect of how Ukraine was represented construct Ukraine as a country in progress, but at the same time as lagging behind. It is thus constructed as backward, but not reversed.

Ukraine's level of economic development is compared to Russia's, which neither was ready for the consequences a free trade agreement between Ukraine and the EU would produce. The

argument posed that because Ukraine and Russia are linked economically through a free trade agreement, this would make Ukraine a direct route from the EU to Russia that would outdo sectors of Russian economy. As Putin (2013a) argues, 'our economy would not be able to bear this, not yet at any rate.' Putin (2013b) also assert that just like Ukraine, Russia is not 'ready to throw open our doors to European goods,' and the two economies are thus similarly positioned 'behind' the EU in economic progress. It is also here a notion of future cooperation with the EU, just as soon as appropriate level of progress is reached. As Lavrov (2013b) said on December 5, future cooperation could be possible 'on an equal basis, rather than from weak market positions and weak competitiveness' and that it is only then Russia 'will talk to partners from the European Union about the creation of a free trade zone and the further liberalisation of investment ties.' However, Putin (2013j) assures that Russian and Ukrainian economies are interlinked and depends on each other. Russia's level of economic development is thus represented as closer to Ukraine than to the EU, and the representation of Ukraine as economically backward does not necessarily convey a negative meaning.

Thus, Russia and Ukraine are represented as interlinked, and this constructs a sense of 'We' contrasted to an 'EU-Other,' which makes cooperation between Ukraine and Russia easier; however, not at any cost. For example, it is repeatedly said that Russia are willing to participate in trilateral negotiations with the EU and Ukraine; however, it is also established that such cooperation must be initiated by Ukraine, not Russia (Lavrov, 2013f; Medvedev, 2013a; Peskov, 2013; Putin, 2013a, 2013b). Thus, in November and the beginning of December, Ukraine is represented as similar to Russia with regards to level of economic progress, and cooperation is possible on equal terms. However, this constructs Ukraine as the one in need for help. Therefore, by offering to cooperate, but at the same time placing Ukraine behind Russia economically, a sense of power is produced. Ukraine is thus represented as distanced from Russia both in terms of power and economic progress. This does not mean that economic cooperation is far-fetched, but the temporal construction of a Ukraine that lags behind Russia, while they simultaneously would suffer from a free trade deal with the EU, constructs a representation of Ukraine that can cooperate with Russia, but at the same time have less authority in such a cooperation.

This power-imbalance between Ukraine and Russia is reconstructed around the Russian-Ukrainian Interstate Commission on December 17, when there is a shift from representing Ukraine as backwards but still in progress, to an emerging representation of Ukraine as reversing. In several press-events on December 17 Putin (2013h) explicitly emphasises that Ukraine is in an economic crisis, and explains that because Ukraine and Russia has faced 'a decrease in trade over the past two years (…) it is time to take vigorous action so that we not only return to the level of previous years, but also create the conditions for moving forward' (Putin, 2013g). In other words, Ukraine is represented as a reversed backward economy, in contrast to a progressive Russia, and although the political solution they suggest is cooperation, Ukraine needs Russia more than Russia needs Ukraine. The solution to a positive development lies with Russia, and Putin (2013i) assures that Russia's focus is on 'what we can do to reverse this negative trend and not just recover the lost ground but put in place the conditions for moving ahead.' The 'We' is thus not consisting of equal subjects; the Russian representation of Ukraine creates an imbalanced power-relation between Ukraine and Russia.

In several speeches and press conferences from mid-December onwards, Putin, which by far is the main voice of the economic position, continues to represent Ukraine in the context of economy; however, instead of focusing so much on the consequences a Ukrainian free trade deal with the EU would have for Russia, he puts more emphasise on the deep economic ties that Ukraine has benefitted from for years. This is also mentioned in earlier explanations, such as in a press conference following a state visit to Italy on November 26, where Putin (2013b) postulate that they are interlinked through

> the deployment of the Russian fleet in Crimea with payments in the form of lower gas prices. The price reduction was $100 dollars, I believe, per 1,000 cubic metres. By today, starting from the time the contract was signed, Russia has received $10 billion less than it should have, and that money remains in Ukraine (…) we are hostages of circumstance.

Russian-Ukrainian gas-relations, which for many is the defining aspect of Russian-Ukrainian relations,[10] resurfaces and is maintained when one of the deals offered by Russia on the Interstate Commission meeting on December 17 is to further reduce gas prices. This also has

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[10] It is written extensively on Russian-Ukrainian power-relations. See for example Balmaceda (1998); Biersack & O'Lear (2014); Rutland (2014); and Stulberg (2015).

an intertextual link to the 2009-deal that was signed with former Prime Minister of Ukraine, Yulia Tymoshenko.[11] Russia asserted then that it was a good deal; however, by reducing the prices, the 2009-gas deal appear less attractive for Ukraine. The discourse on gas-prices thus maintains the economically interlinked relationship between Russia and Ukraine. However, what was earlier seen as an appropriate gas price is now altered, because the new gas price is reduced. Simultaneously, this maintains the notion that Ukraine is dependent on Russia, and is not close to Russia's level of progress. For example, Putin (2013g) points out that 1.5 million Ukrainian citizens work in Russia and thus transfer Russian money to Ukraine, which is an indirect help. Thus, the economic link between Ukraine and Russia reconstructs the notion of a power-imbalance between Russia and Ukraine and Russian hegemonic power in the near abroad. This is thus reminiscent, and maintains, the myth of Ukraine as Russia's little brother.

Nevertheless, the reconstruction of a power-imbalance between Russia and Ukraine, also produce hope for Ukraine, because the continuation of Russian-Ukrainian relations is presented as key to progress. For example, Medvedev (2013a) expressed in a meeting with the former deputy prime minister of Ukraine, Yuriy Boyko on December 4, that 'Ukraine remains a highly important strategic partner for us, and vice versa.' Ukraine and Russia's historically linked economic destinies are constructed several times, for example by Lavrov (2013j) in an interview with Russia Today on December 24, where he said that Ukraine and Russia once 'lived in one country, also with the Baltic States, jointly created industry, infrastructure and various sectors, which still help these republics to economically develop.' Thus, Ukraine is represented as historically linked to Russia, and is thus closer to a Russian Self than an Other. Simultaneously, however, Ukraine is differentiated from Russia through the temporal construct of economic regression, and Russia is represented as Ukraine's best option out. This echoes the image of Ukraine as Russia's little brother, which produce a sense of power and authority to the Russian Self.

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[11] Former Prime Minister of Ukraine, Yulia Tymoshenko, signed a gas deal with Russia in 2009, which later got her sentenced to seven years in prison, for abusing her power to carry out a deal with bad price conditions for Ukraine. She was later released and rehabilitated.

Representing Ukraine: A strategic friend

The temporal representation of Ukraine as 'Little Russia' within the economic position does not only produce a notion of Russian hegemony or supremacy, but also produce responsibility. Within authority lies responsibility, and the ethical dimension of identity construction is thus important for understanding the Russian-Ukrainian relationship. However, Russia's responsibility towards Ukraine is not prominent in the immediate aftermath of the AA-suspension, but (re)emerges around the Russian-Ukrainian Interstate Commission on December 17, simultaneously as Ukrainian temporal identity is represented as reversed and not in progress. I will come back to this later on, but will first develop the ethical dimension which emerge in the immediate aftermath, when the Russian representation of Ukraine constructs a Russian domestic responsibility.

The ethical dimension of the representation of Ukraine in the immediate aftermath of the AA-suspension is linked to Russia's official explanation of why the proposed free trade agreement between Ukraine and Russia would injure Russia. As Putin (2013a) states in the press conference following the meeting with the Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan on November 22, such a deal 'could be ruinous for an entire sector of our economy.' This is repeated several times and does not recede throughout the period in question (Lavrov, 2013f; Putin, 2013b, 2013j). The point is, however, that, by reconstructing the temporal representations of both Russia and Ukraine as not economically ready to enter such a free trade agreement with EU, a Russian responsibility to protect its own business from possible consequences emerges; however, as Lavrov (2013i) explains: '[t]his does not mean that we would introduce any sanctions against Ukraine, we would just return to generally accepted norms, which are called the most-favoured-nation principle, while the free trade zone provides more privileges than this regime.' In other words, Ukraine's integration with the EU through a free trade agreement would pose a threat to Russian economy, and Russia is therefore at risk and must take precautions.

Russia's responsibility towards its own economy is juxtaposed to the Ukrainian responsibility to make a choice based on their own economic interests. Ukraine is thus represented as a business partner, equally viewed as other business partners, such as the EU. The main policy option produced here is therefore to maintain and preserve particular sectors of own economy,

which Ukraine also should do. And, since Russian-Ukrainian economic relations simultaneously is constructed as deeply intertwined as discussed above, Russia's national interest becomes Ukraine's national interest:

> Therefore, without blackmailing anybody, we warned honestly that the CIS Free Trade Zone Treaty, to which Ukraine was a party and lobbied it (President Viktor Yushchenko was the main lobbyist of this Agreement), contains a reservation that if any area of economics of a member state of the Free trade zone faces the situation creating risks for the respective area of national economy, this country has the right to stop providing benefits. (Lavrov, 2013f).

Ukraine is therefore represented as responsible for its own situation. Rhetorically, Lavrov links the free trade agreement between the CIS and Ukraine to former president Viktor Yushchenko, who built his campaign towards the presidential election in 2004 on European integration and NATO-accession. This can function as a way of justifying the inclusion into the CIS, because *even* pro-Western Yushchenko thought so, or serves as a way to clear Russia's name from any pressure towards Ukraine's link to CIS. However, it also produces a sense of Ukrainian responsibility for its own situation. So, although Russia and Ukraine is linked through connections with CIS, they are also constructed as sovereign states that must take responsibility for own actions. Russia and Ukraine is thus business partners, with jurisdictions.

However, in addition to the pragmatism that represent Russia and Ukraine as business partners, another ethical dimension is visible in the discourse; one which emphasises Russia's responsibility towards Ukraine. This is connected to the temporal distance produced between the two countries, which both links and differentiate their relationship and reconstruct a sense of Ukraine as Russia's little brother. For example, in the annual news conference on December 19, Putin (2013j) says that Ukraine 'has deferred payment once again. We fully realise that there are problems with Ukraine's ability to meet these payments. So why should we finish off our main partner?' This development coincides with the resurfacing focus on Russia and Ukrainian historical ties. On December 17, Putin (2013g) said that 'Russia and Ukraine are strategic partners, united by traditions of friendship and close mutually beneficial cooperation in a wide variety of fields.' This focus on Russia and Ukraine's historical and special bond reconstruct a sense of Russian responsibility towards Ukraine that precedes formal CIS regulations. This is further emphasised by the emphasis on how problems in Ukrainian

economy are caused by the global economic crisis, which justifies a softer handling of Ukraine. The economic situation is thus not merely Ukraine's responsibility

The historical relationship between Ukraine and Russia is highlighted several times in mid-December and onwards. For example, on December 18, Lavrov (2013g) asserts that 'again that we view Ukraine as a brotherly state and people. We are connected by historic, cultural, family traditions and ties. Nobody will be able to break them easily.' Putin (2013i) says on December 17 that '[w]e share a centuries-old friendship and the bond of having spent a long time living together in a single country.' In addition, several historical events that connects the two was mentioned by Putin (2013h) the same day: the 200th anniversary of the birth of the poet Taras Shevchenko, who lived in Ukraine while it still was the part of the Russian Empire; the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Sevastopol in 2014; the 2015-anniversary of the Great Patriotic War-victory; and, the 1000th anniversary of the death of Grand Prince Vladimir on July 28. Thus, the special relationship between Russia and Ukraine is emphasised by linking the two nations all the way back to Kievan Rus', and construct a primordial image of originating from the same events. This is therefore connected to the 'Little Russian' identity, as it resurrects memories of the past hegemonic power-relation between Ukraine and Russia, in which Ukraine has been inferior.

The constructed image of a Russian responsibility towards Ukraine becomes prominent in mid-December, which is further emphasised by Russia's sudden willingness to sign '[a] solid package of bilateral agreements' on the Russian-Ukrainian Interstate Commission (President of Russia, 2013). Although the pragmatic explanation of the AA-suspension is still mentioned regularly, the representation of Ukraine as friend increases in mid-December. This happens while demonstrations in Kiev continue, the pressure towards Yanukovych increases, and political interest in Russia's agenda dominates the Western media. It is thus likely that the events at the Russian-Ukrainian Interstate Commission are proposed by Russia to downscale the level of conflict. Nevertheless, by attempting to meet their 'partner halfway' (Putin, 2013h), the notion of responsibility is repeated, and in Putin's news conference on December 19, Russia's responsibility towards Ukraine is emphasised, as Russia 'should act the way close family members do and support the Ukrainian people in this difficult situation' because of the 'special relationship with Ukraine and because we want to continue our cooperation, which

we are also interested in (…) [w]e believe in Ukraine' (Putin, 2013j). Ukraine is not just viewed as Russia's economic partner, which is reflected in the discursive practice that construct a Russian responsibility towards Ukraine.

The two Ukrainian identities that emerges, Ukraine as business partner and Ukraine as friend, both construct a sense of responsibility to protect either Russian business, the members of CIS or the Ukrainian people; but from whom must they be protected? The notion of a Ukrainian and Russian 'We' against a 'EU-Other' is visible in both cases. For example, in a speech and following press conference at a meeting with foreign ministers from EU-member states, on December 16, Lavrov (2013f) stated that:

> [I]t seemed to me today that member states of the EU understand the need of such honest talk rather than attempts to resolve issues behind somebody's back. (…) Using clear examples, we explained that all the processes launched by the Eurasian integration are aimed at the achievement of one task only: to increase competitiveness of economies of the Customs Union – Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus (I hope that the countries, which have filed applications to accede to it will join it) to the level, when we can further liberalise our trade with Europe, and this time on beneficial and more equal conditions rather than slaving and no-win conditions.

The EU is thus represented as the unfair, egoistic external Other that does not take into account the Eastern countries' level of progress. The temporal aspect of future possible cooperation is visible; however, EU must include Russia. Thus, from this perspective, Ukraine is not the only 'victim,' but Russia is also offended by the proposed free trade deal between the EU and Ukraine.

Thus, within the Russian construction of the EU as Ukraine and Russia's common Other lies power. Again, the representations of Ukraine as closer to Self than EU, but still lagging behind Russian development, constructs an ambiguous line between Russia and Ukraine, however, the power-imbalance is not equally ambiguous. Russia's representation of Ukraine in relation to Self and the EU produce an image of Russia as more knowledgeable than both Ukraine and the EU. By asserting that this agreement does not suit Ukraine, Russian authority is produced, because they exercise knowledge that the EU and Ukraine does not understand: 'if you look at the contents of these agreements, then while it is good to dream, many will simply not live to see their dream be realised, never experience it, because the conditions are very harsh' (Putin, 2013c). Russia's privileged knowledge about what's best for its neighbours produce a

sense of authority. It simultaneously constructs an ethical dimension to Russian identity, as such authority produce a responsibility to 'save' their little brother Ukraine. As Putin (2013j) rhetorically asks: '[w]here will the Ukrainian manufacturers turn to with what they produce at home? Are they going to export to Europe? I very much doubt it. It might be possible, but it will be very difficult.' The ethical dimension to how Ukraine is represented, thus, reproduce a Russian sense of authority among its post-Soviet neighbours, and continues the image of centre-periphery power-imbalance between Russia and Ukraine. The notion of a 'We' is juxtaposed to their common EU-Other, which at this point makes possible a cooperation between Ukraine and Russia.

Representing Ukraine: Inside or in-between?

The interlinked, historical tie between Russia and Ukraine reconstructed by temporal and ethical representations, is also visible in the spatial dimension to produce within the economic position. This is mainly done by connecting Ukraine to a Eurasian space, through the CU and the CIS, which is constantly juxtaposed to the EU. However, by repeating the Russian ambition for a common economic space from Lisbon to Vladivostok first coined by Putin (2010), it is also within the spatial dimension a struggle about which direction Russia should take. The representations of Ukraine contribute to the continuation of this debate, in which Ukraine is constructed as both in-between the EU and the CU and within Russia's economic sphere.

The struggle about which 'space' Ukraine belongs to, the EU or Russia (CU), is maintained through the constant repetition of Ukraine's choice between the two; however, according to Russia, this choice is forced upon Ukraine by EU. This is most prominent in Lavrov's speeches and press conferences. For example, on December 20, he claims that Russia ' have never told that Ukraine faces a choice: to be a party to the EU or the CU. Nobody calls it to the European Union'(Lavrov, 2013i). On December 24, he explains that it is the EU that places Ukraine *between* the EU and Russia (Lavrov, 2013j), and repeats the image of a EU that does not play fair, which he for example voiced on December 5:

> If we say that there should be a common economic space from Lisbon to Vladivostok, then why do some economic groups in the European continent, such as the European Union, attempt to advance decisions, which were adopted inside the EU, and request all other countries to implement them? (Lavrov, 2013b).

It is maybe not surprising that Lavrov voices this view most prominently, as he deals with foreign affairs and relations with the EU and consequently is asked about such issues by journalists. However, he often refers to the President, which provides a certain authority to what he says. The point is that, although Russia constantly asserts that they have not provoked this situation, the idea about a Ukraine *between* Europe and Russia is reconstructed. This makes Europe Russia's Other, and Ukraine can either be European or Russian. Nevertheless, although Ukraine is represented as a not (yet) fully part of Russian economic space, the spatial dimension simultaneously (re)construct a sense of 'We' against EU. Again, this increases in mid-December, and in Putin's address to the Federal Assembly on December 12, he notes that 'Ukraine participates in discussions and has repeatedly declared its interest in joining some of the Customs Union's agreements' (Putin, 2013f). Also, on December 24 Ukraine participates in the expanded format meeting of the Eurasian Economic Council (Putin, 2013k). Thus, Ukraine's association with Eurasian projects continues, and shifts the balance from an EU-space to the Russian space. Ukraine is thus presented as closer to Russia than towards Europe.

3.3 'Protest must remain within the framework of the law'

A second dominating position through which Ukraine is represented in the aftermath of the AA-suspension is what I have named the 'legal position.' Phrases and words such as 'legal authority,' 'sovereign borders,' 'internal affair,' legitimate government,' 'indivisibility of security,' 'international law' and 'constitution' are all linked to Ukraine throughout the whole period under investigation. However, as within the economic framework, there is also here degrees of Otherness to how Ukraine is represented, and the representation of a civilised Ukraine is juxtaposed to both an uncivilised Ukraine and a civilised Russia. This produce a variation of ethical, spatial and temporal identity-constructions, and Ukraine's place in relation to Russia and the West is also ambiguous.

Representing Ukraine: Sovereign, legit and equal
The question of Russia's role in Ukraine's suspension of the free trade agreement with the EU, provoked an avalanche of reassurances from Kremlin about Ukraine's status as a sovereign

state. This was done explicitly by asserting that this was a domestic, sovereign and internal affair (Lavrov, 2013b, 2013e; Medvedev, 2013a, 2013b; Russian MFA, 2013). It was also stated several times that Russia had stayed, and would continue to stay, out of Ukraine's internal business, for example by Putin (2013b) who emphasised that 'this is the sovereign choice of Ukraine itself, and we, without any doubt, will respect the choice, whatever it may be.' In addition to the explicit and direct persistence on the AA-suspension as Ukraine's internal affair, it was indirectly underpinned by Putin who on November 22 had only heard about Ukraine's decision 'yesterday' (Putin, 2013a). Although these are all rhetorical moves that more or less intentionally are chosen to clear Russia's name from any allegations about pressure from Kremlin, they simultaneously contribute to the construction of Ukraine as a sovereign state, with defined and clear boundaries *around* and not *within.*

A 'domestic' and 'sovereign' image of Ukraine indicates a defined space that operates on equal terms as Russia, within the legal framework of international law. *Defined space* because 'domestic' requires a sense of inside/outside (R. Walker, 1993); *within the legal framework of international law* because the principle of sovereignty is within Russian discourse linked to 'territorial integrity', 'the indivisibility of security', and 'national interests,' which are all rooted in legal or normative structures, such as international law or OSCE. They are also repeatedly referred to in this period. Thus, the representation of an internal sphere also constructs an external sphere. I will return to the external layer of this position further down in this section, and continue with the representation of an internal defined Ukraine.

Ukraine's sovereignty is repeatedly linked to 'the constitution' and 'legal authorities,' especially by Lavrov and Medvedev. For example, Medvedev (2013a) was

> absolutely confident that Ukraine itself, the people of Ukraine and, consequently, Ukraine's leaders and government will decide where Ukraine should go, and what it should do (…) they have made an appropriate decision in accordance with the constitution, and they did not violate anything,

and Lavrov (2013e) emphasised that

> [t]he government has used its legitimate competence, because only the executive power may adopt decisions to sign or not to sign any international treaties. If any government adopts a decision to sign a document, that document should be ratified by the parliament. They can state

their claims, ask questions, support or not support it, protest or respond within the constitutional, civilised field.

The Ukrainian government is thus justified in accordance with its constitution, which evokes association to the Russian constitution's status within Russian official discourse. In fact, the Russian constitution celebrated its 20th anniversary on December 12 that same year, and in several speeches and articles the Russian constitution is linked to the 'state of law,' 'sovereignty' and 'unity' (Lavrov, 2013d). On December 10, an article by Medvedev (2013a) was published in the Journal Zakon and Rossiyskaya Gazeta, on the occasion of the anniversary, which reemphasised the importance, and historicity, of a Russian 'rule-of-law state.' On a gala concert to mark the 20th anniversary of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, Putin (2013e) continued to underpin this:

> Our people made a historical choice in favour of the Constitution at the referendum on December 12, 1993. Russia got a directly effective document that allowed us to avoid the tragedy of the dissolution of our state, helped stop the devastating spread of civil confrontation, and prevented the nation from once again descending down the path of settling political accounts, as had already happened several times in our history.

The point here is therefore that, the Russian official discourse prominently focuses on the power that lies within the constitution and the legal framework. The representation of Ukraine through linking it with this discourse must be understood in that context. By legitimising the government in Ukraine by its constitutional status produce an image of the Ukrainian state equal to the Russian state.

A sovereign, legal state, are thus in Russian official discourse spatially defined through its constitution. It is similar to countries with a legitimate constitution, but differ in that they have their own, unique constitution. Because they operate within an equally, civilised framework, legitimised by international law, a sense of responsibility towards each other is produced. In addition, they have an inward responsibility towards own citizens, in accordance with its constitution. The constitution thus legitimises the state, and is legitimised by the state. One possible identity produced by representing Ukraine through the legal framework, is thus a Ukrainian legal state that are equally sophisticated, and must therefore be respected accordingly. Thus, from this point of view the responsibility lies at the hands of Ukrainian politicians and not at any external actors, and the reaction would therefore be to not interfere,

but 'behave civilly in this situation' (Medvedev, 2013b). Ukraine and Russia is therefore represented as constitutionally equal, and their responsibility lies first and foremost with their own citizens. A clear boundary between the two is thus constructed.

However, there are also within this position a sense of a Russian and Ukrainian 'We' against the Western 'Them.' Ukraine's sane, sovereign choice to suspend the AA-suspension is contrasted to the West's 'response on the brink of hysteria to the sovereign decision of legitimate authorities of Ukraine' (Lavrov, 2013e). Representatives from EU, NATO and other Western countries are described as 'rabid' 'fierce' and 'provocateurs,' and the demonstrations that occur in Ukraine are linked to these Western responses. Thus, although Russia and Ukraine are equal but different in that they are sovereign states of law, they are also closer to each other than each of them are to the West:

> There is also another ageless Christian truth, which tells us to help our neighbours, and this help will return. Ukraine is our close neighbour and fraternal people. We sincerely wish to contribute that the situation in this country is stable and remains in the constitutional field. We wish Ukrainians, all the parties and all political powers agree among themselves how to overcome one or another crisis moment, how to respect the constitution and the laws adopted by the Verkhovna Rada. This must take place without visitors, who come without invitation, which is not polite in itself. (Lavrov, 2013h).

This 'We' produce a sense of a closeness, which, as previously demonstrated, becomes more prominent around the Russian-Ukrainian Interstate Commission. The quote above stems from December 19, the same day that Putin in his news conference states that

> It was in this situation that we made our decision, which is linked to our particular relationship with Ukraine. Let me say again that this decision is not about the interests of Ukraine's current government, but is about the interests of Ukraine's people. (Putin, 2013j).

Thus, although the focus is on Ukraine's sovereign status, Ukraine is simultaneously constructed as closer to the Russian Self than to the West. The construction of Ukraine as 'sovereign' and 'friend' makes close cooperation a policy option, and the imagined line between between East and West is moved Westwards while Ukraine are represented as closer to Self.

Representing Ukraine: International or domestic?

The construction of a Ukrainian-Russian 'We' that moves the imagined border Westwards, coincides with the increased anti-Western discourse. Thus, throughout this period, traditional East/West-rhetoric resurface and intensifies, in which Ukraine is represented as a piece in the geopolitical game between Russia and NATO:

> The situation in Ukraine was also mentioned. The attempts to make this country a site for geostrategic fight are devastating for Ukraine and for Europe, because they are contrary to modern European aspirations and the tasks set by prominent European leaders (I mean the President of France Charles de Gaulle), who then spoke about common European space from the Atlantic Ocean to the Urals. (Lavrov, 2013j).

'Ukraine' is represented as a space within a greater space where traditional power-political struggle is battled out by linking 'Ukraine' to terms like 'Cold War,' 'with us or against us,' friend-or-foe' and 'NATO-expansion' (Lavrov, 2013a, 2013b, 2013f, 2013j). The situation in Kiev provides meaning through a continuation of Cold War-logic which is contrasted to Russia's articulation of Self in connection to OSCE's Astana declaration from 2010, and the principle of a 'free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok, rooted in agreed principles, shared commitments and common goals' (OSCE, 2010). Thus, NATO is represented as 'reversed' and 'backwards,' taking a step away from the progress associated with 'modern Europe,' and Russia is represented as 'modern' and 'European.' The temporal feel to the East/West-debate is that NATO is outdated and belongs to a different time, while Ukraine is caught in a limbo between the only remaining ghost of the Cold War (NATO), and a modern security space with undivided lines (Russia). This has two spatial dimension; Ukraine is accidently the space of these events, or it is the key to win the battle between Russia and the West.

It is mainly Lavrov who repeat the East/West-rhetoric, although he persistently denies that Russia wants to return to such logic. This is again not very surprising, as his concern is foreign policy, and because two of the press conferences in which Ukraine and East/West-rhetoric are connected is at the NATO-Russian council on December 4 and at the OSCE Foreign Ministers Council on December 5. Putin (2013d) also touches upon this topic in a speech on Russian Popular Front conference on the same date, when he notes that 'Russia is not located between the East and the West. In fact, it is the East and West that are located to the left and right

of Russia.' The point is that, although this is not the dominating position through which Ukraine is represented in this period, this is a continuation of an East/West dichotomy that has been maintained for a long time (I. B. Neumann, 1999; Petersson, 2012). The dominant Other here is NATO and the U.S., and not Ukraine. As Lavrov (2013j) claim on December 24: 'as soon as they gather within the framework of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, anti-Russian phobias come through.' By representing Ukraine in conjunction with the anti-Western discourse, Russia is also contributing to a reconstruction of an East/West divide. However, the legitimate Ukrainian government is not in itself articulated as a threat.

Representing Ukraine: An emerging tectonic split

While Russian discourse is mostly focused on the legal and economic dimensions of the AA-suspension, demonstrations in Kiev erupts. However, this is only addressed a few times by Kremlin in this period, and does not dominate the representations of Ukraine. Nevertheless, a notion of a division within Ukraine is visible between 'demonstrators' and 'civilians.' For example, on December 2, when asked about the protests in Kiev, Putin (2013c) says that:

> Regarding the events in Ukraine, they remind me less of a revolution than of a pogrom. (…) Either the opposition cannot always control what happens there, or it's just a certain political screen for extremist activities. We believe that the situation will nevertheless become more normal, and that in the end the Ukrainian leadership, and Ukrainian people themselves, will determine their next steps for the near future and the long-term.

'Pogrom' is an expression used about violent attacks on Jews in Russia during the 19th and 20th century, and several pogrom-riots took place in Ukraine in the Civil War period. This is, however, the only time Putin addresses the protestors with such comparisons. He only briefly mentions the protests in Kiev on December 12, but without negative descriptions (Putin, 2013f). However, there is a notion about an emerging divide within Ukraine in Russian official discourse, when Medvedev (2013c) on December 13 says that:

> As for Ukrainian society, I think that it should overcome the tectonic split that has emerged in it because it is threatening the stability and existence of Ukraine as a state. We want our Ukrainian friends to resolve all of their problems themselves and arrive at a consensus – a consolidated decision. We don't want anyone to interfere with these efforts or deprive them of sovereignty.

The demonstrations are thus not viewed as a threat to Russia yet, and Ukraine is not perceived as a threat to Russian security. However, as will be visible in the next chapter, this changes dramatically.

3.4   Chapter conclusion

This chapter has analysed the Russian official discourse on Ukraine, from the suspension of AA on November 20, to the end of December 2013, to see how Ukraine is represented in this period. Although the annexation of Crimea is still months away, the inclusion of discourse from this period makes possible a comparison with discourse closer to the annexation, which illuminates how fast discourse can change. It also shows that Russian discourse on Ukraine is not only 'bad' or 'good,' but degrees of otherness is visible, which allows for a variation of identity constructins that produce different policy options. For example, Ukraine is represented as an equal partner and a sovereign state, and simultaneously as less developed and weak. The dividing line between 'Russia' and 'Ukraine' is thus not fixed, and it becomes more uncertain the more it is challenged by events the dominating discourse cannot explain, such as the increasing protests and demonstrations in Kiev. Thus, a change in the way Ukraine is represented in Russian official discourse is possible to detect.

The main finding is that the representation of Ukraine moves from a pragmatic notion of a business partner, to a historically bound fraternal friend. Representation of Ukraine in the immediate aftermath of the AA-suspension is pragmatically linked to economic and legal discourse. These representations are continued throughout the period; however, the focus on Russia and Ukraine's shared history increases in mid-December, which coincides with the Russian-Ukrainian Interstate Commission on December 17. The representation of Ukraine as a *fraternal brother* construct Ukraine closer to the Russian Self; however, it also produces an increased power-imbalance between the two. The representation of Ukraine as a friend constructs an ethical dimension of responsibility which connects the two. Simultaneously, by helping Ukraine, Russia is constructed as stronger and more developed. Therefore, while the ethical dimension constructs Ukraine as closer to the Russian Self, the temporal dimension constructs a gap between the two. The representation of Ukraine thus produces both authority

and responsibility towards Ukraine. As will be argued in the next chapter, these uncertain lines between Self and Other becomes even more visible towards the annexation. However, possible cooperation and friendly ties between the Russian state and the Ukrainian state are still maintained in Russian official discourse at the end of 2013.

4. Towards the annexation: From *fraternal brother* to *compatriot*

This chapter analyses Russian official discourse from January 2014 to the annexation of Crimea on March 18. As will be discussed, the representations of Ukraine in this period changes drastically from the previous period analysed. The economic position, which was the dominating position in November and December 2013, drowns in negative representations of Ukrainian protesters at the end of January 2014. It seems as if the situation could not be explained or represented as an economic issue any longer, and the dominating discourse from the aftermath of the AA-suspension changes (Torfing, 2005: 16). A clear securitizing move occurred in the Russian official discourse on Ukraine, that is, to transfer a subject into an existential threat (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998: 25). However, as will be discussed in this chapter, the referent object, that which is threatened (Ibid.: 36), changes throughout the period in question, which affects Russia's possible political responses. The situation is thus transformed from a Ukrainian internal and sovereign conflict that must be solved accordingly, to a situation that makes possible Russian interference. Simultaneously, there is an ambiguity in the discourse regarding who or what the threat is, and degrees of otherness is thus visible. Ukraine is not only constructed as Russia's radical Other, but the notion of Ukraine as Russia's little brother is maintained, and the Inside/Outside-dichotomy is simultaneously constructed through several temporal, ethical and spatial dimensions. The West is again represented as Russia's main Other, and by constantly linking all aspects of the situation in Ukraine to a legal framework, Russia is represented as a victim *and* a saviour.

The chapter continues with a short discussion on texts and context that underpins the analysis. The following analysis is divided into three subsections that deal with dominating discourses through which Ukraine is represented; security, geopolitics, and humanities. Each subchapter analyses various representations of Ukraine, and the chapter concludes with a discussion of ambiguous representation of Ukraine as friend and enemy.

4.1 Introduction: Time frame, texts and change

Just as in the previous chapter, the analysis presented here includes texts from Lavrov, Medvedev, and Putin, and more general statements from each of their offices. In addition, it includes interviews, statements and briefings from Deputy Director of the Information and Press Department of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Maria Zakharova and official representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, Alexander Lukashevich. Especially the latter is increasingly commenting on issues regarding Ukraine in the whole period under investigation. Therefore, the analysed discourse concerns the events leading up to the official Russian signing of the Treaty of Accession on March 18. This is done to illuminate how the Russian official representations of Ukraine slightly changes several times within a very short time frame.

Although the representations of Ukraine changes in the events leading up to the annexation, Ukraine does not appear on either Putin, Lavrov or Medvedev's agenda until January 21, when it comes up in a question round after Lavrov (2014b) has outlined the 2013 results of Russian diplomacy. Although demonstrations had continued in Kiev and Ukraine since people first came out to protest after the suspension of AA, Lavrov did not mention Ukraine in his speech. He talks about it indirectly, by mentioning the relationship with Western partners and repeating that '[n]ow everything has changed. We hope that ideology will be put on the side-lines, and dividing lines, which some people wish to keep in Atlantic Europe, will be washed out' (Ibid.); but, it is not until the subsequent press conference that he discusses Ukraine directly, after a journalist brings up the issue. However, from January 24, the situation in Ukraine appears on the Russian Security Council's official agenda, and on February 25, Ukraine is the only issue discussed in that forum (President of Russia, 2014a, 2014c, 2014d, 2014e, 2014o). This coincides with the escalation of events after the Ukrainian parliament passed an anti-protest legislation on January 16 and the situation on Maidan and other places in Ukraine intensified.

In an attempt to stabilise the situation and prevent further escalation of violence, an agreement was signed on February 21 between the Ukrainian Government and the opposition leaders with the mediation of the foreign ministers of Germany, Poland and France. Russia's

representative in Kiev, Vladimir Lukin, also contributing to the negotiations, although he did not sign, to demonstrate that this was an internal affair (Russian MFA, 2014d). However, the protesters did not accept this deal, and on February 22, Yanukovych fled the country, while the Ukrainian parliament voted to remove him from office. The next day, the speaker of parliament, Oleksander Turchynov, was appointed interim president, and a new government formed. On March 2, 2014 the new Prime Minister, Arseniy Yatsensyuk, abolished the AA-suspension (Кабінет Міністрів України, 2014). It is at this point, from the beginning of March, that Putin and Lavrov begins to address the situation in Ukraine as 'extraordinary' (Lavrov, 2014j; President of Russia, 2014j; Putin, 2014b). These events has later been named the Revolution of Dignity by for example Ukraine and the EU, while it is referred to as a coup d'état in Russian official discourse. It is not surprising then that Ukraine is referred to more frequently in Russian official discourse throughout this period than in the previous period analysed.

The body of texts that underpins this chapter's analysis is thus greater than in the previous chapter, and most of it stems from Lavrov or the Russian ministry of Foreign Affairs. As discussed earlier, this is not surprising as this ministry deals with foreign policy-issues; however, this is also of discursive significance. The few times Ukraine appears on Medvedev's agenda in January and February, is in conjunction with Russian-Ukrainian economic cooperation (Medvedev, 2013d, 2014a; President of Russia, 2014b), and while the situation in Ukraine is mentioned in conjunction with telephone conversations between Putin and other state leaders on the official Website for the President of Russia, he only addresses the issue orally a few times in this period: in a press conference after the Russian-EU summit on January 28 when he is asked by a journalist to comment on the latest developments in Ukraine (Putin, 2014a); in a government meeting with Medvedev and First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov on January 29, which mostly consist of talks about Russian-Ukrainian economic relations (President of Russia, 2014b); and on February 27, when Putin instructs 'the Government to continue contacts with partners in Kiev on developing Russian-Ukrainian trade and economic ties' (President of Russia, 2014f). There might be many reasons why Putin and Medvedev do not engage as much in the discourse on Ukraine; for example, the Olympic Games in Sochi is held during this period. However, the silence from Putin in this period can also be analysed as part of a discursive practice, because Kremlin is not completely

silent. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs comments on the issue several times in this period. Thus, in January and February, the situation in Ukraine is represented as a Ukrainian internal and sovereign affair that should be dealt with by the Foreign Ministry, and Russian-Ukrainian relations are still mostly concerned with economic questions.

However, the frequency of official statements regarding Ukraine increases towards the end of February, and Putin (2014c) holds an hour long press conference on March 4 that only concerns the situation in Ukraine. As will be outlined in detail, this coincides with the escalating tension in Southwest and Western of Ukraine, in Donbass and especially in Crimea. Ukraine is accordingly the subject of many statements, speeches, interviews, press conferences and phone calls every day from February 27 to March 18,[12] and these will be dealt with as I move along with the analysis. However, it is also in this period mostly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that comments on the situation, and after Putin's press conference, his statements are mostly referred to through notes on telephone conversations with other state leaders. Medvedev only touches on the issue a few times in the beginning of March. However on March 18, the day of the signing, Putin is again speaking about the situation in a speech to the Federal Assembly (Putin, 2014e) and on a 'We are together!' meeting in support of the Crimean accession (Putin, 2014f). Even if the representation of Ukraine as negative and radical continues, Putin and Medvedev do not comment much on the situation. They visit Paralympics in Sochi, and it is thus in this period also a continuation of the representation of the Ukraine crisis as a sovereign crisis. Nevertheless, it is in this period the Crimea transfers from Other to Self. I will now analyse how Ukraine is represented, to see how this was made possible, and I begin with the most obvious trend in the discourse, namely the representation of Ukraine as the radical Other.

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[12] It continues to be on the agenda of Russian official discourse, but that is not within the scope of this thesis.

4.2   'We feel the smell of anti-Semitism'

The main change in Russian official discourse from the end of December 2013 to the end of January 2014 is the increased negative othering of Ukrainian protesters. The demonstrators on Maidan are throughout the whole period described as 'neo-Nazis,' 'anti-Semitic,' 'militants,' 'nationalists,' 'extremists' and 'radicals,' and these representations intensifies in the second half of February. However, this does not in itself urge Russia to interfere. When something is constructed as an existential threat, it must be constructed as a threat to *something*. As will be visible in this subchapter, that *something,* the referent object, changes throughout the period in question. In January and the beginning of February, the referent object is the Ukrainian government, and representatives of the state, such as the police, the military and politicians. However, when Yanukovych is ousted, and a partially new government is formed around February 22, the tone in Russian official discourse changes and a second referent object emerges, that is, Russian citizens in Ukraine. Shortly after, Russian compatriots[13] and the whole Russian-speaking population in Ukraine becomes the referent object of the threat posed by '[a]rmed and masked militants [that] are still roaming the streets of Kiev' (Putin, 2014c). The ethical dimension to Russian identity changes accordingly, which opens up for urgent measures.

Representing Ukraine: 'Brown revolution'

Already on January 21, Lavrov (2014b) sums up the main line of criticism from Kremlin, which dominates the representation of Ukraine in this period:

> The beginning of this was: the occupation of the town-hall, government buildings. Militants have stayed in these buildings for several weeks. Imagine if this happened in any country of the European Union. Is this possible? No one would allow this. Bashing, attacks on the police, arson, Molotov cocktails, explosives – this is terrible, it violates all the European code of conduct! I think that appeals to be reasonable proclaimed by Vitaly Klichko on behalf of opposition leaders, show that the situation has got out of control. (…) There is no doubt that they wanted a reaction from the law enforcement agencies, this is the goal of any provocation.

First of all, he represents the demonstrators in Kiev as extremely violent and primitive; second of all, they threaten official buildings and representatives of the justice system; and finally,

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[13] 'Compatriots' refer to ethnic Russians and Russian-speakers who lives abroad and does not hold Russian citizenship.

the opposition is responsible. This narrative is repeated several times with a variety of descriptions (Lavrov, 2014d, 2014e, 2014f, 2014h; Lukashevich, 2014b, 2014d; Russian MFA, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c). These representations of Ukraine construct ethical and temporal identities.

The demonization of protesters in Ukraine has implications for the representation of both Ukrainian and Russian identity. By linking protesters to extreme violence, anti-democratic street crime, radical nationalism and unprovoked aggression, the demonstrators are presented as barbaric, inhuman, and out of control. According to Putin (2014a), even 'a priest in Western Ukraine was calling on the crowd to go to Kiev and topple the Government.' Simultaneously, these uncontrolled masses of 'radical forces' (Russian MFA, 2014b) are juxtaposed to European and 'civilised code of conduct'(Lavrov, 2014e), and Ukraine is thus represented as backwards and distanced from European progress. Russia, which is indirectly differentiated from Ukrainian protestors, is thus represented as civilised. This is also constantly repeated by stating that everyone should attempt to 'return the situation to a constitutional one' (Lavrov, 2014c). The construction of Ukraine as an uncontrolled, uncivilised country is thus producing a temporal gap between the two nations, which maintains a clear line between Russia and Ukraine.

This is further emphasised by the repetition of linking Ukrainian protestors to terms such as 'neo-Nazi' and 'fascists,' and when the violence escalates on February 19, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs names the demonstrations in Kiev a 'brown revolution' (Russian MFA, 2014c). When asked to elaborate on the statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a press briefing the next day, Lukashevich (2014d) answered that:

> [w]e clearly see Neo-Nazi symbols (they draw a swastika not only on the façades of buildings, but also in rooms), we hear slogans cried out in the streets by individual brigades, we feel the smell of anti-Semitism (…) "Brown plague" (fascism) is a very dangerous phenomenon, which was once destroyed by collective effort.

These terms do not only construct a sense of 'evilness' as they evoke association to the terrible crimes that was conducted by Nazis during World War II, but it also constructs a deeper division between Russia and Ukraine. World War II is an important memory in the construction of Russian identity, as it is known as the Great Patriotic War in Russia, which

maintains the historical memory of how Russia liberated Europe from the Nazis. Thus, by linking Ukrainian demonstrators to Nazism and fascism, they are simultaneously differentiated from Russians, and the temporal gap between the two increases.

Nevertheless, although dehumanizing language can de-construct ethical responsibility and remove moral restraints that prevent extreme situations like violence or amoral behaviour, this does not in itself make extreme measures possible. This must be seen in relation to the referent object – the *threatened.* In January and through most of February, the Ukrainian Government and the representatives of the legal system are constructed as the referent object. For example, the representations of Ukrainian demonstrators are constantly linked to attacks on police men and the occupation of governmental buildings (Lavrov, 2014d). On February 19, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported that '[t]he militants (…) have beaten up and thrown stones at law enforcement officials, burned cars, destroyed a pharmacy, attacked the headquarters of the Party of Regions, and blocked the building of the Verkhovna Rada' (Russian MFA, 2014b) and that '[t]here are dead and wounded among both civilians and law enforcement agencies, who defend the legal interests of the state to ensure law and order' (Russian MFA, 2014c). Several descriptions of how the militants attack military personnel, police, regional governors and prosecutor's office buildings are repeated, and the threat to the Ukrainian officials is further emphasised by how the events are described as a coup d'état (Lavrov, 2014g, 2014h; Lukashevich, 2014d). Thus, in the build-up to the revolution/coup d'état on February 22, the referent subject is mainly the Ukrainian Government and those who are seen as its representatives.

This could lead to possible external interference; however, the subject referent is articulated with two other positions, namely that the opposition, with support from the West are responsible for the provocations, and that this is an internal affair that must be solved within the framework of the Ukrainian constitution. Thus, the responsibility to stabilise the situation lies within Ukraine, between the Government and the opposition, and with Western leaders who support the protests. I will return to the representations of Ukraine and the West in the next subchapter, and focus here on the internal responsibilities. For example, it is repeated that Ukraine and the Ukrainian people are capable of dealing with this situation themselves, and that Russia will stay out of the internal affairs of Ukraine (Lavrov, 2014b, 2014e, 2014i;

Lukashevich, 2014b, 2014d; Putin, 2014a; Russian MFA, 2014i). The opposition is constantly linked to the protestors, and increasingly so towards the revolution/coup d'état (Lavrov, 2014b, 2014e, 2014g, 2014h; President of Russia, 2014u; Russian MFA, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c). The point here is not that they *say* that this is a sovereign affair and that the opposition is responsible for threats to representatives of the state posed by violent 'militia bands'; the point is that these representations create an image of a unstable Ukraine. The period up until the revolution/coup d'état continues the image of a 'tectonic split' as discussed in the previous chapter. However, there is no existential threat to Russia, and Russian official discourse represents this is an internal problem.

Representing Ukraine: An emerging threat

The threat is rearticulated around the revolution/coup d'état while tension increases in Southwest and Western Ukraine, which construct a new possible threatened, namely Russian citizens abroad, compatriots and the Russian-speaking population. Anti-Russian rhetoric is already mentioned in an article by the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov (2014e) published in the *Kommersant* newspaper on February 13, and the focus on protection of Russians abroad and Russian-speakers are important aspects of Russian foreign policy; however, from February 22 and onwards, this emerges as an important aspect in Russia's official discourse on Ukraine. Three contextual events should be mentioned: Firstly, this happens simultaneously as the opposition comes to power and the Maidan demonstrations cools down. Secondly, pro-Russian and pro-Western clashes escalate in Donbas and Crimea. Thirdly, the Russian government reports that a Russian citizen is wounded after militants shot at a tourist bus in Rovno Region in Ukraine on February 22 (Russian MFA, 2014e). Thus, the already tense situation in Ukraine becomes more acute at the end of February, and an existential threat is constructed that lay the ground for more urgent policies.

The threat to Russian citizens living or staying in Ukraine is first explicitly articulated by Medvedev (2014a) in a press conference on February 24, where he asserts that 'there is a threat to our interests and to the life and health of our people who are staying at the embassy.' The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2014f) states the same day that they are 'deeply concerned' with the Ukrainian parliament's 'stamping' of new laws 'aimed at deprivation of humanitarian rights of Russians and other national minorities living in Ukraine.' On March 1

Putin (2014b) submits an appeal to the Federation Council to use armed forces on the territory of Ukraine:

> In connection with the extraordinary situation that has developed in Ukraine and the threat to citizens of the Russian Federation, our compatriots, the personnel of the military contingent of the Russian Federation Armed Forces deployed on the territory of Ukraine (Autonomous Republic of Crimea) in accordance with international agreement; pursuant to Article 102.1 (d) of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, I hereby appeal to the Council of Federation of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation to use the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine until the social and political situation in that country is normalised.

The threat to Russian compatriots, nationals and Russian speakers are often repeated from now on, especially around the end of February and beginning of March, and it peaks again towards the Crimean referendum on March 16 (Lavrov, 2014j, 2014k; Lukashevich, 2014e; President of Russia, 2014g, 2014h, 2014i, 2014j, 2014k, 2014m, 2014n; Putin, 2014c; Russian MFA, 2014j, 2014s). The situation is thus radically changed, and this happens in a relatively short time.

There might be many reasons why this happens, and I am not going to speculate on whether this was planned or not; however, the point here is that when the opposition, supported by what is represented as anti-governmental and anti-constitutional extremists comes into power, what is meant by 'Ukraine' has slightly changed. The government is no longer viewed as legitimate. Thus, the new government cannot merely be accepted, because it is already established that the opposition are closely linked to the protesters, which are constructed as Russia's negative Other. The new government is therefore also Russia's negative other. The situation in Ukraine has all this time, from the beginning of the crisis in November, been linked to a legal discourse. Although Russia deem the new government 'an anti-constitutional takeover, an armed seizure of power' (Putin, 2014c), the opposition is now in charge of the law-making. This is also a discursive practice that challenges the representation of the opposition in relation to the backward and reactionary 'roaming' mob, as they now are controlling that which the Russian official discourse draws authority from, namely the law. Thus, the Ukrainian state emerges as Russia's Other, which increases the threat to Russian citizens and compatriots in Ukraine.

There are several other events which also construct an image of Ukrainian Russophobia (Russian MFA, 2014k). For example, the references to the Great Patriotic War increases, and while it in January and beginning of February mostly was visible in references to Nazism and fascism, it now is articulated as a direct assault of Russian history and values:

> The besmearing of historical monuments in Ukraine continues. Now they have become a mockery of the memory of the warriors, who were the liberators of Ukraine. In Sumy, they created a waste dump near the Eternal Flame which burns on the Memorial in memory of the heroes of the Great Patriotic War. And they are doing this in the year of the anniversary of the 70 years of liberation of Ukraine. (Russian MFA, 2014h).

The besmearing of historical monuments and memorials of the Great Patriotic war are articulated together with the besmearing of Orthodox temples and newly implemented laws to prevent Russian language (Lavrov, 2014j; Russian MFA, 2014g, 2014i, 2014k, 2014m, 2014u). Thus, the gap between Russia and Ukraine is not merely constructed in the temporal backward/civilised dimension as argued in the previous section. It is understood, as a direct threat to Russian culture and values. The spatial divide between Russia and Ukraine are thus reconstructed; however, this also maintain the tectonic split within Ukraine. However, not between anti-government and pro-government groups, but between the Ukrainian-speaking and Russian-speaking population.

The representation of Ukraine as a security threat is even further reinforced by the Russian military exercise of combat conducted close to the Ukrainian borders which began on February 26, and lasted several days (President of Russia, 2014l). Why the military exercise happened at this point might be subject to speculations; however, such movement of troops are also discursive practice that gains meaning through how it is articulated and represented. Although Putin denied that these troops were planning on intervening in Ukraine, the movements of troops contributed to the image of an extraordinary security situation. The meaning ascribed to this event must be understood contextually. For example, this happened in the same period as the Russian Government published a statement where Medvedev (2014b) 'noted that Russia reserves the right to protect the legal interests of its citizens and military personnel quartered in Crimea.' Also, the military exercise occurs while the representation of radicalised pro-Western protesters increases, with the introduction of terms such as 'terrorism,'

'ultranationalists' and even 'Banderovites'[14] (Lavrov, 2014j; President of Russia, 2014g, 2014j, 2014u; Russian MFA, 2014f, 2014k). Articulated together, this represent the situation as dangerous, and because Russian nationals are represented as threatening, this constructs a Russian responsibility to act accordingly.

Representing Ukraine: Friend or foe?

However, even if the situation in Ukraine is transformed to a security threat in mid-February to the beginning of March, which construct an existential threat to Russian citizens, compatriots and the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine, the situation is more complex than just whether Ukraine is Russia's negative or positive Other. Throughout the whole period, Ukraine is constantly represented as both Russia's 'friend' and 'partner,' and there is a difference in how protestors, opposition, civilians, and the Russian-speaking population are represented. It is thus not only a case of a Russian protection of Russians, but the 'special bond' that has been maintained through discursive practice as shown in the previous chapter, is continued in this context as well. In other words, it is not only constructed a responsibility towards Russian citizens and compatriots, but also towards Ukrainian civilians and a backward country that needs help.

Simultaneously as the protestors on Maidan are represented as violent, uncivilised militias who gradually become a threat to Russian nationals and compatriots in Ukraine, the representation of Ukraine as strategic friend is continued. 'Ukraine' is still linked to positive terms such as 'neighbour,' 'partner,' 'friend,' 'brother,' 'colleague,' (Lavrov, 2014b, 2014e; President of Russia, 2014b; Putin, 2014d). Even when the situation intensifies towards the end of February, the 'fraternal friend' and 'strategic partner' is mentioned several times in conjunction with economic Russian-Ukrainian relations (Lavrov, 2014i; Russian MFA, 2014c, 2014k). Medvedev (2014a, 2014c) emphasises both on February 24 and March 3 that

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[14] 'Banderovites,' or 'banderites' is a term used by pro-Russians to describe pro-Western nationalists, named after the Ukrainian nationalis Stepan Banders. According to Riabchuk (2016), '[t]he use of "Banderites" has been stretched far beyond its original reference to the militant followers of Stepan Bandera, to a degree where it loses any sense and logic. Now, it is not just a metonym for Ukrainian nationalists, or west Ukrainians, or Ukrainian speakers in general, but for all those inhabitants of Ukraine who do not wish to welcome the Russian army with tricolour flags and flowers' (82).

Ukraine is an important trade and economic partner. And in his hour long press conference on March 04, Putin (2014c) says that:

> we have always considered Ukraine not only a neighbour, but also a brotherly neighbouring republic, and will continue to do so. Our Armed Forces are comrades in arms, friends, many of whom know each other personally. I am certain, and I stress, I am certain that the Ukrainian military and the Russian military will not be facing each other, they will be on the same side in a fight.

The Russian-Ukrainian 'special bond' as fraternal brothers is reconstructed, which creates a sense of 'We' against 'Them.' However, 'We' is not Ukrainians and Russians against the West, as discussed in the previous chapter. By juxtaposing Ukrainian brothers to the Ukrainian ultranationalists, which is Russia's and the Russian speaking Ukrainian's radical Other, another divide is constructed within Ukraine. Thus, Ukraine is continued to be represented as a tectonic split; however, the line that divides Russia and Ukraine are constructed differently depending on how Ukraine is articulated.

In addition, yet another layer in the representation of Ukrainians emerges, namely the 'peaceful civilians.' This representation of Ukraine also appears consistently throughout the period in question (Russian MFA, 2014f). Phrases such as to 'ensure the safety of civilians,' 'the rights of civilians are being violated in Ukraine,' and 'to protect the interests of all Ukrainian citizens' are repeated several times (Russian MFA, 2014e; The Russian Government, 2014; Zakharova, 2014). On March 15, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs states that 'Russia is receiving many requests to protect peaceful civilians' (Russian MFA, 2014v). In other words, 'Ukraine' is not one, fixed unity in Russian official discourse. Many Ukrainian identities are more or less prominent throughout the whole period in question. It would therefore be too simple an explanation that Ukraine is constructed as Russia's radical Other, which made a Russian intervention possible. Although the Othering is part of the discourse in which the annexation was made possible, the representations of Ukraine are varied and produce different ethical dimensions and construct different degrees of Otherness. The dividing line between Ukraine and Russia is thus not constant, but is constantly adjusted and construct several constellations of 'We' and 'Them.' Thus, the struggle is not just between Russia as Self and Ukraine as Other, but also between various Self's and Other's, not only for Russia but also for Ukraine.

4.3 'When the nobles fight, the servants suffer'

This impacts how Russian identity is constructed, as degrees of Otherness also construct various Selves. The following section will discuss the three dominating Russian identities (re)constructed by the representation of Ukraine from January until the annexation of Crimea in March. Although still visible, the negative othering of Ukrainian demonstrators is less dominating in the Russian official discourse on Ukraine in mid-march. The focus, especially by Lukashevich and Lavrov, is turned towards the East/West divide, and the polarisation between Russia on the one hand and the West on the other increases in March. Thus, as well as the representations of domestic and internal Ukraine continues, a representation of Ukraine as key in a geopolitical game is visible, which maintains an East/West rhetoric. In addition, the references to domestic and international law and norms also increases, and the threat to Russian nationals and Russian compatriots are linked to discourse on international law and humanitarian aid. Two main Russian identities are thus (re)constructed in this period, Russia as a 'victim' and Russia as the 'saviour,' which together reconstruct the notion of a Russian Self as the 'big brother' in post-Soviet space.

Representing Russia: Victim

As mentioned in the previous subchapter, the protestors, the opposition and Western leaders are constantly linked in Russian official discourse, which moves the internal problems in Ukraine into an international dimension. This is not to suggest that the international level is superior to the internal situation in Ukraine, or to degrade Ukraine's role in it; however, the various representations of Ukraine and constructions of Russian identity happens in parallel spatial dimension. This echoes the discourse analysed in the previous chapter, and the East/West-polarisation is maintained. In January and the beginning of February, the main anti-Western rhetoric is maintained, and Lavrov continues to blame the West for provoking violence. He claims that Russia 'do not want any "behind-the-scene" manoeuvres either, to play the old card "with us or against us"' and asserts that Russia and the West 'are still unable to overcome the phobias of the past epoch, the aspiration to see the state of affairs through the "friend-or-foe" lens' (Lavrov, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d, 2014e). Although these representations are linked to the Western interference in Ukraine and produce a sense of irresponsible leaders that only want to force European values upon other countries, they also impact how Russian

identity is constructed. Towards the end of February and through March, one such identity construct is Russia as a *victim*.

The narrative of a geopolitical struggle between Russia and the West intensifies towards the revolution/coup d'état in the latter half of February, which degrades Ukraine's authority and makes Russia the main, and different, protagonist. Although the West is blamed for using the situation to promote geopolitical interests, the repetition of this claim reconstructs the East/West-dichotomy (Lavrov, 2014l; Lukashevich, 2014d; Russian MFA, 2014f). Russia is thus also responsible for maintaining this discourse. By doing so, Russia is (re)constructed as one of the main protagonists against the Ukrainian opposition and the demonstrating mob, which is controlled by Russia's main antagonist, the West. Lukashevich (2014c) even calls the Western interference for 'puppetry.' Ukraine thus emerges as 'token money in geopolitical games' (Lavrov, 2014h):

> We are convinced that the root of all the problems is that the world community was not able to jointly respond to anti-government protests organised by armed people, in gross violation of Ukrainian laws. On the contrary, they supported and even promoted these protests (…) without any double standards. (Lavrov, 2014k).

Thus, in addition to being represented as backwards and divided, Ukraine appears powerless. The lack of power and authority makes Ukraine a weak state. Russia is thus presented as a strong state, whose issue is not with Ukraine, but with the West. The temporal gap between Ukraine and Russia is thus maintained, and the Russian Self in constructed as a Great Power, whose main Other is the West, and especially NATO.

Although EU and the European council, and to some extent OSCE is mentioned as turning towards Russia, it is still NATO that appears as Russia's biggest threat. NATO-involvement is repeatedly phrased as something negative (Putin, 2014c; Russian MFA, 2014i, 2014j), and the relationship worsened when NATO suspends meetings within the NATO-Russian council:

> The decision of the NATO council to suspend meetings within the framework of practical cooperation with Russia is evidence of a pretentious and lopsided approach to the analysis of causes and consequences of the events in Ukraine. (Lukashevich, 2014f).

The phrasing of NATO as pretentious, while all the time linking it to the events in Ukraine and a geopolitical mission to move the border Eastwards, constructs a Russian enemy that is aggressive, unfair and unreasonable. However, representations of NATO, the U.S. and EU often overlaps, and thus within Russian official discourse 'the West' is maintained as Russia's main Other. So, although Russia continually complaints about the Western 'blame-game,' (Lavrov, 2014g), they also maintain the anti-Western discourse. This impacts the construction of Russian identity. By differentiating Russia from the West 'and its primitive distortion of reality' (Lukashevich, 2014e), Russia appears as the only fair and reasonable actor in this conflict. This produces an image of Russia as the actor that holds privileged knowledge and a sense of morality, which produce authority to Russia in contrast to the West.

However, this also construct a sense of Russian victimhood, and the prominent idea is that the West attempts to 'outflank' Russia in Ukraine (Lavrov, 2014k). This is further reproduced by the constant statements on what Ukraine and the West does to actively boycott Russia; such as, preventing Russian media to participate in press conferences; to ban Russian broadcasting in Ukraine; to close the borders for Russian journalists; to launch anti-Russian campaigns; and, to refuse cooperation (Lavrov, 2014e; Lukashevich, 2014a, 2014g; Russian MFA, 2014l, 2014m, 2014n, 2014o, 2014p, 2014t). Although Russian official discourse arguably consist mostly of propaganda, these constant one-sided representations of Russia's role in Ukraine, construct a sense of 'them against us.'. Even if this might be intentional propaganda, we still experience and believe that certain things are 'true.' So, from the epistemological point of view, knowledge is attained by the ongoing constitution of these 'truths' through discursive practices that is altered by and alters the idea of what is truth. Thus, what might seem as intentional lies used as rhetorical tools for politicians to reach their wanted political goals, possess a constitutive power, and is made possible because of already existing ideas of 'truths.' This makes the issue of changing a discourse complicated, because the speakers of the discourses believe it as the truth. The Russian discourse on the West is thus not new, and by representing Ukraine in conjunction to the Western 'war against Russian language and everything associated with Russia,' Russian official discourse maintains the East/West division. Russia is constructed as a victim that NATO and the West wants to 'punish' (Russian MFA, 2014k), and Ukraine is thus divided between the two.

There is, however, also a voice within the Russian official discourse, which prevent NATO and Russia from clashing. The possible cooperation between Russia and the West, and especially the U.S. is also articulated, and 'despite their differences of opinion, they must continue working together to seek solutions that will help to stabilise the situation in Ukraine' (President of Russia, 2014q). In addition, a different discourse contributes to the stabile East/West discourse, and prevents it from escalating further. Russia's constant articulation of Ukraine, the Self and transnational affairs in the context of international- and humanitarian law, constructs a Russian ethical identity that balance the anti-Western discourse.

Representing Russia: Saviour

This brings us to the second identity construct that is prominent in this period, namely the *saviour*. 'Saviour' is a loaded word; however, it is here chosen deliberately because it conveys both a sense of 'liberator' and 'hero' – two aspects through which Russia justifies its actions. For example, this idea is expressed by Putin (2014a), who on January 28 asserts that. 'when the nobles fight, the servants suffer (…) the ordinary people always feel the pain. And we would very much like for this burden on the ordinary people to be minimal.' Statements about the Russian willingness and responsibility, to help 'those in need' increases throughout this period. However, this also changes slightly, and moves from economic help, to existential help, towards a responsibility to live up the will of its people.

In January and the beginning of February, then, the possible 'help' to Ukraine was offered in terms of economic pragmatism (President of Russia, 2014b; Putin, 2014a). Lavrov (2014b) asserts on January 21 that 'Ukraine is our neighbour, partner, friend and brother (…) We are convinced that internal problems of any states, including Ukraine, must be resolved through dialogue, within the constitutional and legal framework and without external interference.' And Putin (2014a) stated that:

> [a]s for our readiness to help Ukraine, I have already spoken about this and can repeat it now: both the loan we spoke about and the gradual quarterly decrease in energy prices, first and foremost gas, are based on necessity and our wish to provide support – not to a particular government, but to the Ukrainian nation.

The will to help the Ukrainian people were visible; however, as Lavrov (2014b) assured, '[t]here can only be one circumstance – if we are asked to do this. As far as I understand, such

help is not required.' The notion of a big brother (Russia) that is willing to aid its little brother (Ukraine) that became prominent in mid-December 2013, seems to have cooled down. This is not very surprising, if one also considers the way Russian official discourse demonize protesters in Kiev.

However, as we get closer to the revolution/coup d'état, the tone changes and the representations of a weak and helpless 'Ukraine' in relation to an evil and egoistic 'West' increases. This also coincides with increased amounts of references to humanitarian discourse, both through money aid policies directed at Crimea (President of Russia, 2014f), but also in reference to the right to protect Russian citizens and compatriots in Ukraine. On March 3, Lavrov (2014j) stated that Russia would uphold 'the protection of our nationals and compatriots, defence of the most fundamental human right – the right to live.' Two days later, he was even more explicit, assuring that 'we will do everything to prevent bloodshed, attempts on the life and health of those who live in Ukraine, including nationals of the Russian Federation' (Lavrov, 2014k). The right to defend 'compatriots and nationals in Ukraine' is repeated several times (Lavrov, 2014g; Russian MFA, 2014s, 2014u, 2014x). However, this makes yet another turn, as the focus shifts from the *saving Crimea*, to *acting on the will of the Crimean people*: 'the Crimean people express their will in full accordance with international law, in particular, article 1 of the United Nations Charter that sets forth the principle of equal rights and self-determination' (President of Russia, 2014p). Several references are made to international- and humanitarian law to justification of the Crimean referendum (President of Russia, 2014q, 2014t; Putin, 2014e; Russian MFA, 2014r, 2014w, 2014x), and the articulation of 'international law' with 'in compliance with the will of the people' is powerful.

As discussed in the previous subchapter, Ukraine is now prominently represented both as a radical Other, but also as a fraternal brother. So, simultaneously as the gap between Russia and radical Ukraine becomes deeper, the tie between Russia and Compatriots in Ukraine becomes closer. Thus, the construction of a radical Other (protestors) that threatens a significant Other (compatriots) produce a sense of ethical responsibility towards that significant Other. When this is constantly represented in an increased East/West-polarization that produce a Russian sense of uniqueness which produce an even stronger ethical dimension.

It is not only a protection of a Ukrainian Other, it is also a protection of a Russian Self. It is in this process that Russia as the 'saviour' emerges:

> European history confirms, with evidence, that peace and stability in the continent was ensured in periods when Russia actively participated in European affairs, while attempts to isolate our country have always led to the activation of processes leading to sleepwalking into the disasters of world wars. (Lavrov, 2014e).

Although the representation of Ukraine as a piece in a geopolitical game between Russia and the West construct a tectonic split within Ukraine, it is also in this period a sense of a Ukrainian and Russian 'We' juxtaposed to the West. However, there are also here various representations of Ukraine that construct degrees of otherness. Ukraine as part of 'We' is altered when Ukraine simultaneously is represented as weak and in need of humanitarian help. This produce a strong ethical dimension to Russian identity, which makes it possible to take extraordinary measures. The construction of Russian identity as a 'Saviour' is thus essential to understand how the annexation of Crimea became possible.

The notion of a 'saved' Crimea is further emphasised by how the annexation is talked about on March 18, the day of the signing. The President's website could announce that 'the people of Crimea made the decision to reunite with Russia' (President of Russia, 2014r), and in a speech by Putin (2014f) at a meeting in support of Crimea's accession to the Russian Federation titled 'We are together!' the same day he affirmed that the Crimean population had 'clearly expressed [their] will to be with Russia.' At the same time, by stressing that this was Crimea's 'will,' he clearly attempts to stabilise and de-securitize the situation, and continues to emphasise the special relationship with Ukraine: '[b]ut I believe that Ukraine will overcome all the hardships. We are not just neighbours, we are family and our future success depends on both of us, Russia and Ukraine.'

4.4   Chapter conclusion

This chapter has analysed Russian official discourse from January 2014 to the annexation of Crimea on March 18. The main finding is that the representations of Ukraine in this period drastically changes from the previous period analysed. The situation in Ukraine reaches Russian agenda more frequently, and while the increased protests in the beginning only is

represented as a threat to the Ukrainian government and their representatives, it evolves into a threat of Russian citizens and Russian compatriots. Thus, degrees of otherness is visible, and Ukraine is not only constructed as Russia's radical Other, but the notion of Ukraine as Russia's little brother is maintained.

5. Conclusion

By applying the method of discourse analysis, this thesis has attempted to analyse Russian official discourse from the suspension of AA on November 20, 2013 to the annexation of Crimea on March 18, 2014, to see how the Russian annexation of Crimea was made possible. My inquiry has not been to answer *why* Russia annexed Crimea, but to look at *how* the annexation was made possible through discursive practice. I have built my analysis on a poststructural reading of the theory of Self and Other, that assumes that identity and foreign policy are mutually constitutive. The theoretical assumption guiding the analysis was that the social construction of a radical Other cannot in itself explain why Russia broke the principle of sovereignty and violated another state's sovereign territory. Rather, one must analyse the degrees of otherness and various Selves that produce several temporal, ethical and spatial identities. The combination, and struggle, between especially ethical and temporal identities, seems to construct identities and policies that justifies the urgent measures.

The analysis was divided into two parts; the first dealt with the Russian official response to the AA-suspension and to its repercussions, from November 20 to December 31, 2013; the second analysed Russian official discourse from January 2014 to the annexation of Crimea on March 18. This was done in an attempt to illuminate changes and continuities in the Russian official discourse that lead up to the annexation.

The first period was dominated by two positions through which Ukraine was represented, the economic and the legal. Russia's emphasis on right to self-determination and respect for Ukraine's sovereignty are striking; however, several representations of Ukraine created various ethical dimensions of Russian identity, and uncertainty and degrees of otherness is visible in Russia's representations of Ukraine. For example, Ukraine is represented as an equal partner and a sovereign state, and simultaneously as less developed and weak. The main finding is thus that the representation of Ukraine moves from a pragmatic notion of a business partner, to a historically bound fraternal friend. This change coincides with the Russian-Ukrainian Interstate Commission on December 17.

The representation of Ukraine as a *fraternal brother* construct Ukraine closer to the Russian Self; however, it also produces an increased power-imbalance between the two; while the ethical dimension of *friend* constructs Ukraine as closer to the Russian Self, the temporal dimension of a *less developed* Ukraine constructs a gap between the two. It is through these features that the dominating representation of Ukraine as Russia's strategic *partner* is gradually challenged by the representation of Ukraine as Russia's strategic *friend*. This makes possible a change in Russian economic policy towards Ukraine, and a sense of reconciliation emerges in mid-December. Thus, possible cooperation and friendly ties between the Russian state and the Ukrainian state are still maintained in Russian official discourse at the end of 2013.

The dividing line between 'Russia' and 'Ukraine' is not fixed, and it becomes more uncertain the more it is challenged by events the dominating discourse cannot explain, such as the increasing protests and demonstrations in Kiev. Thus, the discourse in the second period changes drastically from the previous period analysed. Alienation and the construction of a negative other prevails. Although a securitizing move occurred, the subjects of existential threat changed throughout the period in question. The situation was transformed from being a Ukrainian internal and sovereign conflict to a threat to Russian compatriots. Simultaneously, it was also here an uncertainty regarding who or what the threat was. Ukraine is thus not only constructed as Russia's radical Other, but the notion of Ukraine as Russia's little brother is maintained, and the Inside/Outside-dichotomy is simultaneously constructed through several temporal, ethical and spatial dimensions. In both periods, anti-Western discourse are prominent, and the West is represented as Russia's main Other. By constantly linking all aspects of the situation in Ukraine to a legal framework, Russia is represented as a victim of the West's geopolitical agenda; however, through the ethical and temporal representation of Ukraine, power and responsibility is produced, which allows for Russia to 'save' Crimea and return it to the motherland.

Thus, Russia's representation of Ukraine gradually intensifies in alienation. The West, and Western Ukraine, becomes the radical Other, and the dehumanising language construct Russia and Ukraine further apart. However, it is not merely the radical Othering of Western Ukraine and the West that makes possible an intervention. Just as with the invasion into Georgia, the

actual territory which the Russian military physically annexed is also represented as close to the Self. Thus, the border between Russia and Ukraine was redrawn in the Russian consciousness before the official annexation. It is therefore not necessarily the Othering that makes an invasion possible, but also the identification of Self, and it is not only threats that makes possible actions that can be perceived as aggressive. The uncertain boundaries between Self and Other that construct degrees of otherness and various Selves, produce different, and sometimes struggling ethical, spatial and temporal identities. And it is especially with the ethical sense of responsibility that makes the annexation of Crimea possible.

Russia is therefore not automatically a threat to Europe or the West because they *can*. By analysing Russia's actions in its near abroad, such as in Crimea, it is more likely that neighbouring post-Soviet countries with large Russian diaspora in borderlands should worry more than for example Finland and Norway. The line between Self and Other is stronger defined between Nordic countries and Russian than between post-Soviet countries and Russia. However, in light of Russian-Ukrainian relations, this reconstruction of borders might make the division between the two countries more fixed. Russian-Ukrainian relations might therefore remerge as more polarised; however, a clearer defined sovereign border might also reconstruct the representation of Ukraine as partner.

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