

## DISCUSSION PAPER NO.02/2020

# EUROPEAN IDENTITY DISCOURSES IN THE CONTESTED NEIGHBORHOOD OF EUROPE AND RUSSIA

## The Case of Ukraine

Salome Minesashvili

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*Since the 1990s, the notion of belonging to Europe has been embedded in a number of the former Soviet states' domestic discourses. These European identity discourses are highly contested, both domestically and internationally, and operate beyond the European Union community, giving the European identity concept its peculiar character. At the same time, these states have been through turbulent times and numerous crises since the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, due to a lack of comparative and longitudinal studies on these discourses, not much is known whether and how these reconstructed images of the European Self have been changing. This paper examines the development of European identity discourse based on the case of Ukraine. The posed question is empirically explored by a study of Ukrainian mass media discourse on European identity for the period of 2004-2017. Changes in the discourse are examined in the context of domestic and foreign political developments in order to uncover the conditions that instigate change in identity notions and contestation around them. The paper finds that while the contestation persists over time, it can fluctuate depending on the event. During the given time period, the Orange Revolution and the war with Russia have resulted in the most significant changes when the contestation changes in favor of the pro-European discourse, which becomes dominant on the expense of the anti-European one.*

### KEYWORDS

European identity, Ukraine, color revolution, Russo-Ukrainian war

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## 1 Introduction and Research Question

The collapse of the Soviet Union compelled its former members to redefine themselves not only domestically, but also on international arena including their relative location and belonging to a region (Fawn, 2006, p.1). The notion of belonging to Europe has actively emerged among some countries, presented as a belonging to not only a political but also to a cultural community. As a result, interrelationship between the national and European visions of community had to be "negotiated specifically in the context of national and European identity discourses" (Kaschuba, 2007, p.25) and the process is still ongoing. The process of "restructuring of belonging" (Darieva and Kaschuba, 2007, p.18) was nested not only within democratic and market-economic transitions but also operated in a highly dynamic regional and international context. How these reconstructed images of the Self as European have been developing over time and under what conditions have they seen change are to be studied in this research. Therefore, the study proposes the following research question:

*Under what conditions do European identity discourses change in the post-Soviet states?*

European identity concept has become a large part of research on European integration. The question of what happens to European collective identity in times of crisis-ridden European Union has become especially pressing in the recent times (Kaina et al, 2016). Among others, the recent events of Euro crisis, Brexit and migration crisis are discussed also in the context of European identity crisis and its potential change (for example, Siedentop, 2011; Karolewski, Kaina and Kuhn, 2016; Galpin, 2017). However, majority of European identity research is EU-centric, undertaken within the boundaries of EU integration project, focused on EU member states or EU-specific and EU-bound events (White et al, 2008; Beck and Grande, 2007; Krzyzanowski, 2009; Cirlanaru, 2016). The membership element however, is missing for the case of the former Soviet states that hold European identity discourses on the "margins of Europe" (Darieva and Kaschuba, 2007). Therefore, the research is innovative as it studies European identities beyond community where societies are not directly exposed to European institution and at the same time discourses operate in a highly turbulent environment.

On the other hand, while the collapse of the Soviet Union is an agreed point of change for European identity discourses (Kuzio, 2002; Fawn, 2003; Darieva and Kaschuba, 2007; Kaneva, 2011), the scholarly literature on the post-Soviet states lacks longitudinal study that would systematically and comparatively analyze other developments responsible for variation of the discourses. Most of the literature deals with incidental case studies (White and Feklyunina, 2014) while limited comparative or longitudinal identity studies exclusively focus either on political discourses (i.e. Kuzio, 2001; Wolczuk, 2000; Wydra, 2010; Orlova, 2017; Kakachia et al, 2018) or public identification through opinion polls (i.e. White et al, 2002; White et al, 2008; Muller, 2011; Mestvirishvili and Mestvirishvili, 2014). In compensation, this research studies European identity discourses as public

discourses in a dynamic sense for a longer time period between 2004 and 2017. Public discourse captures identity positions of not only a single elite group (such as political for instance) but also a rather complex contestation existing around the European identity notion by inclusion of other elite groups as well. Studying identity constructions in the post-Soviet states acquires high importance because these constructions are intertwined not only with their foreign policy choices but also with the choices of state/society structures and paths of development.

## 2 Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

The goal is to systematically establish conditions of change when it comes to public European identity discourses. Grand theories of constructivism and Social Identity Theory (SIT) inform definition of change within European identity discourse that include different types of development such as changes in: content and contestation of identities (Abdelal et al 2006). Since there is no overarching theory of identity change and its conditions, for establishing conditions of change the study proposes a framework combining premises from multiple approaches and theories. For this purpose, I deductively identify and test conditions of change proposed by Historical Institutionalism (HI) and mid-range theories such as legitimacy and communications theories.

Public identity discourse is studied as mass media discourse which is a platform where different identity discourses meet each other, attempting to gain public attention (Val Aelst and Walgrave, 2016; Galpin, 2017). However, public discourse reflected in media is still considered as an elite discourse, since media is selective in terms of its speakers that is often determined by structural powers (Risse, 2014). Thus, those who make it to the media discourse are the elite groups with power and the public European identity is an elite construction of identity. Identity discourse is a medium through which elites communicate with public and deliver the message that legitimates and establishes their own versions of identity. Therefore, change in identity construction is affected by any event, which is challenging or declining legitimacy of certain elite groups. Accordingly, several conditions can be deduced that produce domestic or external challenges to elites in the country:

Critical junctures: Novel and uncertain environment is a context for identity change and even more so for change in identity construction. These shifts are often referred as critical junctures, a notion emerging from Historical Institutionalism (Hall and Taylor, 1996). Critical junctures pertain to crisis due to novel information, experiences of failure, traumatic experiences and massive inconsistencies between cognitive schemas and beliefs (Giesen, 1993). This "commonly destabilizing shock" gives rise to an ideational vacuum and previously held ideas no longer provide a base for problem solving and policy-making (Marcussen, 2000). Critical junctures such as war and revolutions that Georgia and Ukraine went through also challenge elite

legitimacy that affects identity construction discourse. Hypothesis 2: European identity discourse changes during critical junctures.

External actor reaction: Identities are not constructed in a vacuum and can be engaged by both internal and external actors (Goff and Dunn, 2004, p.241). As Flockhart (2006) notes for the case of socialization, "not only the socialize must identify with the in-group, but the socializing agent must accept the aspiring in-group member as an acceptable candidate". Elites can maintain legitimacy in front of domestic audience if the referred external actors conform with their discourse. In such cases, reactions of both Europe as part of the Self and of Russia as an Other for the "European Self" are important. Examples would be when Europe/European Union recognizes country as European and offers the country what the elites promise their societies (for instance, visa liberalization). Examples from the Russian side include economic embargos, gas supply cuts or opening its market for Georgia and Ukraine. Hypothesis 3: European identity discourse changes when external actor reaction changes.

Other than testing the identified conditions, the study remains open to other conditions as well by explorative approach. Therefore, it takes both deductive and inductive approach with constant move between the theory and empirics and aims to also identify other events that can intensify or change content and contestation of identity discourse.

### 3 Methodology

From the post-Soviet countries (excluding Baltic States that are members of the EU), the discourse of European belongingness to different extent has presence in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova (White et al, 2008), Georgia (Kakachia, 2012; Gvalia et al, 2011) and Armenia (Darieva and Kaschuba, 2007). Among those Ukraine is one of the promising cases for exploring the research questions since it has been through various events, including critical junctures such as revolutions and war with Russia. Therefore, Ukraine is selected as a case study and its public discourse on European identity is followed in a longitudinal manner between 2004 – 2017.

In terms of data analysis, the study follows a research design primarily based on the methods of qualitative and more specifically, content analysis. European identity construction is studied as a discourse but instead of concentrating on a specific elite group such as political, economic, cultural etc., the target of analysis is public discourse, believed to be better grasping contestation among different actors. Public identity discourse is studied as mass media discourse for the time period of 2004-2017. Media is considered as a "master forum" of public debates, which unlike other forums, includes virtually everyone in media audience (Pfetsch and Heft, 2014, p.33). Media is understood as a communication platform (Val Aelst and Walgrave, 2016; Galpin, 2017) but other than mirroring social conflicts (Risse, 2014), media is also

an independent actor (Strath and Wodak, 2009) thus conveying positions of different elite groups including journalists themselves.

Studying European identity discourse through media is based on the database created from national newspaper articles. The database includes over 600 articles from two Ukrainian newspapers (Zerkalo Nedeli and Gazeta 2000) The newspapers are sampled so that they capture European identity discourse specifically and are coded in MAXQDA program as well as divided into pro and anti-European elements.

Analysis and hypothesis testing are performed in the following order. In order to establish conditions of change, by exhaustive literature review I identify major events events in terms of crisis, EU and Russia reactions and I test the hypotheses by analyzing public European identity discourse during these vents. Three potential critical junctures are included in the analysis: Orange Revolution, Euromaidan and war with Russia. From external actor reactions (from Russia and the EU), I select four events with Russia and five with Europe. Public discourse is examined in detail during the identified events to detect major categories that persist during the events but also changes in comparison to the previous discourse. For this purpose, the discourse during each event is firstly quantitatively analysed by comparing frequency changes within pro-European and anti-European discourses. Frequency analysis allows for detecting major trends such as whether discourse becomes more or less European or whether contestation increases or decreases. In the second part, qualitative analysis is performed by detailed review of codes and texts to examine what exactly changes within identity content.

## 4 European identity discourse in Ukraine until 2004

Ukraine's European identity until 2004 is usually characterized as a highly contested notion, emerging in the milieu of Ukraine's struggles domestically and internationally. The concept is incorporated among some of the identity categories but its meaning is subject to multiple interpretations by different groups. The concept and its use vary due to domestic and external developments, especially in response to reactions from Russia and the West/EU.

On Act on Declaration of Independence of Ukraine was adopted on 24 August 1991 by the Ukrainian Parliament that also called for a referendum on independence. Majority supporting independence, it was the Ukrainian referendum that defined the fate of the Soviet Union on 1 December 1991. The dissolution of the USSR has become a starting point for debates on national identity and nation building in Ukraine since it was the imperial collapse that provoked popular movement to sovereignty and not the other way around (Michajlyszyn, 2008). At the start of the new millennia, this identity questions have become inseparable from foreign policy and especially figuring out the place between Europe and Russia (ibid).

Being a post-communist state, Ukraine was regarded as post-colonial country with inherited “inferiority complex” that contributed to uncertainty and contested nature of its identity (Kuzio, 1998; Melnykovska et al, 2012; Riabchuk 2002). At the same time identity questions were closely intertwined with domestic and foreign policies since definition of Other largely influenced these issues (Kuzio, 2001). In Ukrainian national identity two Others vary among different discourses: Russia and Europe (Shulman, 2004). Independence is necessarily related to nation-building that builds on differences from neighbors and in Ukraine’s case from Russia. Russia is the closest in terms of history, culture and language therefore, the need to distance in comparison to central Europeans is even larger (Kuzio, 2001). In fact, Ukraine’s nation “is constructed through the constant reiteration of its differences from Russia” (White and Feklyunina, 2014, p.138). Russia is an important part in making the Ukrainian nation, “fostering of the Ukrainian nation within the boundaries of a newly independent state has compelled the un-making or, at least, re-making of the notion of the ‘Russian nation’” (Dragneva and Wolczuk, 2015, p.12). Most Ukrainian leaders created a narrative explaining difference between Ukraine and Russia which also incorporated their closeness (ibid). That is why even the president Leonid Kuchma, who was considered as more Russophile, still continued the nation-building policies of his predecessor Leonid Kravchuk (Kolsto, 2000; Janmaat, 2000).

Cultural and historical affinity with Russia has shaped Russia’s perception of Ukraine on the one hand and Ukraine’s identity debates on the other. Ukrainian language belongs to Eastern Slavic language group along with Russian. Sharing historical origins with Russia further entangles the two nations. Kyivan Rus, the East Slavic state that existed between 11th and 13th centuries became a place from where Russian Tsars descended. Correspondingly Russian narrative treats it as the first Russian state (Michajlyszyn, 2008). But located in what is now Ukraine, Ukrainians and Belarusians have the same right to its legacy. These affinities produce Russian perception of Ukraine as “little Russians” and Ukraine’s competing narratives starting from sharing the Russian narrative to completely rejecting it.

On the other hand, western Ukraine’s different historical experience with its origins in Galicia, forms another stand among identity discourses (White and Feklyunina, 2014). Being under the rule of Polish and Lithuanian Kingdoms, western Ukraine is distinguished by pro-European stand. After the independence, the perception of the EU as a civilizational and geopolitical entity was largely widespread among the post-communist states and Ukraine, among them that also became slowly supplemented with a perception of the EU as a community of values, norms and standards (Dragneva and Wolczuk, 2015). These different identity positions before 2004 are usually grouped in three major categories by the scholars. Each defines not only extents of Otherness of Russia and Europe, but also the Self in terms of national identity.

The first category combines those who are called Russophiles and Sovietophiles, who characterize Russia as a leading Eastern Slavic nation, while Ukraine is not considered as a separate ethnic group (Kuzio, 2006). This radical left perceives the West as the Other and believes that the latter reduces Ukraine to a colonial state

(Kuzio, 2001). Russia as an elder brother is believed to be inheriting the Kiev Rus legacy. These two groups either advocate for a reconstituted USSR or consider Ukraine as “little Russians” (Kuzio, 2006). On the political level Sovietophiles belong to Communist and Progressive Socialist Parties of Ukraine. In terms of foreign policy, this school treats Russia as a strategic partner and advocates for integration into the Russia-led unions, for the Sovietophiles a symbol of the USSR revival (ibid). Europe is the Other and neither Ukraine nor Russia are considered to be in Europe (Kuzio, 2001).

The second, Ukrainophile category disentangled Ukrainian and Russian identities including their political cultures and seeking break from Russia. This narrative portrays Ukraine as primarily a European nation whose development was distorted by Russification and Sovietization and strives to “return to Europe” similar to the central and east European states (Riabchuk, 2012). The main Other is Russia seen “as having a history and culture estranged from individualistic and freedom-based development models” (Riabchuk, 2012, p.6). The Russian Other is defined in ethno territorial terms including Russian state and its citizens who deny Ukraine as a separate ethnic group and its right to independence (Kuzio, 2001). The debate goes back to the Kievan Rus, which is claimed as a homeland to Ukrainian nation (ibid).

The third Eastern Slavic category or centrists is more of a reaction to the other two categories, particularly against the Ukrainophiles, perceiving them too nationalist (Kuzio, 2006) and places itself in the middle of the other two categories, based on two ethnic groups – Ukrainian and Russian (Schulman, 2004). The Eastern Slavic group considers complete disentangling from Russia as a deviation from “scholarly” objective standards (ibid, p.413). This school emphasizes common features with Russia including language, mutual history and culture but promoting equality among eastern Slavs without giving hierarchical priority to Russia and at the same time supporting Ukraine’s independence. Therefore, this version of identity bases its views on bi-cultural, bi-ethnic, bi-lingual premises. Domestically it advocates for policies that give equal stand to Ukrainian and Russian languages and culture (Schulman, 2004). In foreign policy, they do not deny integration with the EU but only together with Russia (Kuzio, 2006).

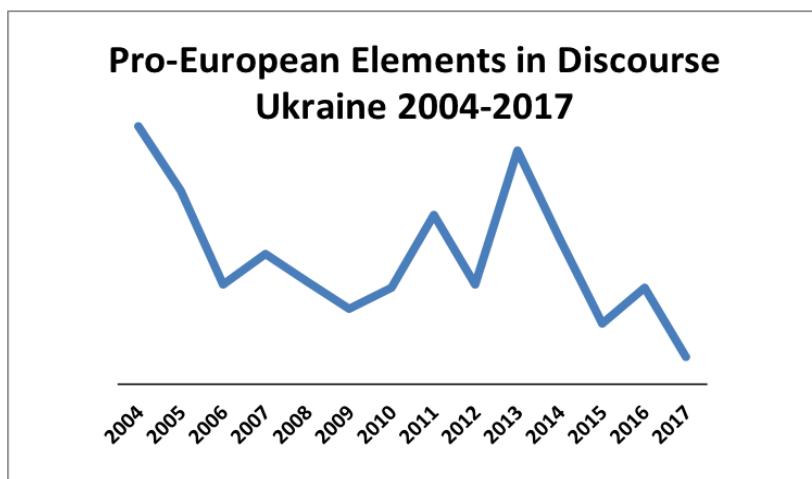
After independence, Ukraine, willing to attach its identity to supra-national identities, had two versions to choose from, one provided by “elder brother” Russia in the form of Eurasian/Slavic identity and European on the other hand (Melnykovska et al, 2012). These identity options are not neutral but each relates to the type of governance (democracy or autocracy) and is influenced by external actors, EU and Russia that “pull countries towards opposite foreign orientations” (ibid, p.133). Therefore, these categories were closely intertwined with both domestic and foreign policies of Ukraine between 1991 and 2004, reflected in political discourse and policy choices with varying degrees and interchangeably. Willingness to attach itself to either of the supranational identities was determined by multiple of factors, but also by foreign policy and integration processes with the Western institutions (Melnykovska et al, 2012) as well as with Russia.

## 5 Empirical analysis: European identity discourse 2004 - 2017

### General trends

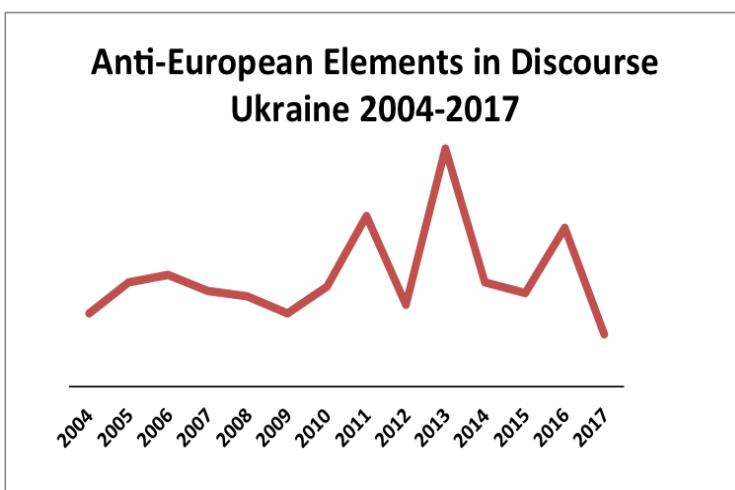
First step of analysis follows general trends and developments in the discourse. The aggregated pro and anti-European elements are examined by frequency analysis of codes by each year during 2004-2017. The results allow for general comparison between the years, for capturing the major changing points as well as for contestation between them.

### Pro-European elements



Analysis of pro-European elements shows that the discourse went through multiple of changes during the selected 14 years. The discourse is characterized by everything but stability, with fluctuation each year. The highest pick points appear to be firstly in 2013, followed by 2004, 2005, 2011 and 2016. On the other hand, the lowest points are noticeable for 2015 and 2009.

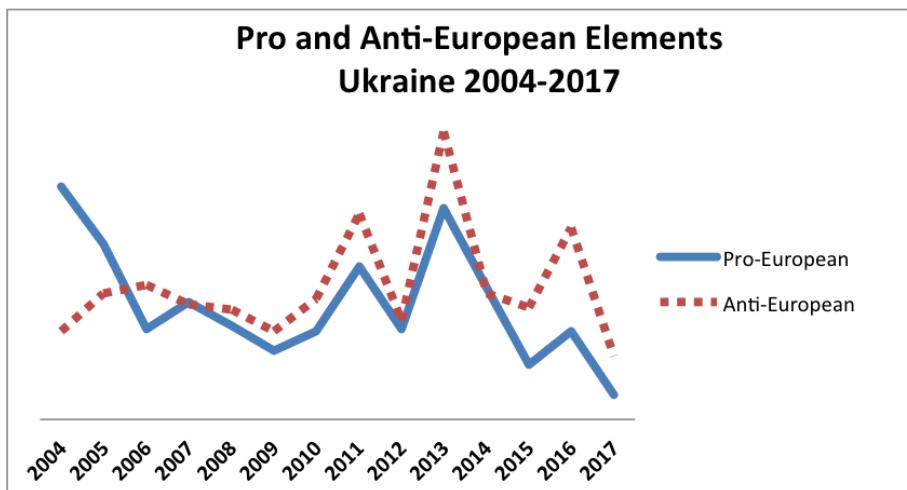
### Anti-European elements



Anti-European elements are also characterized with high instability. The change, in terms of increase in frequency, take place in the years of 2013, 2011 and 2016. Highest decreasing trends occur in 2012 and 2014-2015. But in general, the lowest point in comparison to other years is 2004.

It is also interesting to see how each discourse changes in comparison to each other. This could give a general idea about the contestation level in the overall discourse on European identity.

#### *Pro- and anti-European elements*



In general, the discourse remains highly contested, meaning that usually pro and anti-European elements elevate or decrease in similar periods. In 2011, 2013 and 2016 both discourses seem to be elevating. The only exception remains 2004 where there is a huge gap between the two discourses and pro-European elements seem to be dominating the overall discourse. Accordingly, preliminary assumption based on first glance at data suggests that the contestation was the lowest in 2004 and highest in 2011, 2013 and 2016.

As next step, I delve into each group of selected events to see the type of change, if any, that takes place during the sampled events.

#### *European identity discourse before 2004 (January - October, 2004)*

Analysis of the discourse before the Orange Revolution reveals that contestation is present since there is no agreement about what Europe is, what kind of Europe country belongs to, who is the Other, Europe's vision of the country, extent of its support and willingness to accept country as well as suggested policies with Europe.

Definition of Europe and defining its borders vary within the discourse. Europe is referred as part of a larger entity, the West as well as simply Europe. But more specific reference of European Union is also part of the discourse. In general, there are three major paradigms to which Europe belongs to: cultural, economic and political. Europe as a cultural entity provokes different normative positions within the identity discourse: whereas on the one hand it is referred to as a great civilization and country is claimed to be belonging to it in terms of shared culture and values as

well as aspiration. The other side claims difference based on Eastern Orthodoxy as a major differentiating point between Ukraine and Europe. There is a third position that refuses such binary definition and states that the country is in fact a mixture of Asian and European cultures. There seems to be an agreement that political culture of Ukraine is not European yet, being yet far from European democracy and the latter seems to be the major attribute of fully European self. Lastly, when it comes to geographical belonging to Europe, the speakers seem to be treating perception of Europe as essential, especially the country's geographical location. The argument that Ukraine is not simply at the edge of Europe but it is within Europe is part of the discourse.

In terms of economic dimension, also contested views emerge. Whereas one part of discourse claims that Europe is economically prosperous community, the other presents the opposite, even stating that in terms of economy, Europe is behind Russia.

Within the political dimension, three major critical points emerge. First point rests on the argument that Europe is an entity with a sense of superiority that looks down on other countries. The other two points fall within the idea that Europe is part of a geopolitical game with the east. According to the first one, Europe is a weak entity and is not capable of independent behavior, especially without the US. The other category places Europe within this competition and criticizes it for building a union similar to Russia's. The European Union is even compared to the USSR as similar in its structure and goals.

Within the category of those who support integration or cooperation with Europe, they would like to belong to one or several of types of Europe including cultural, civic and economic. The goals of becoming European/joining Europe can be divided into two major arguments. The first primarily focuses on the value system of Europe and the benefits of becoming part of it, including becoming democratic and acquiring good governance system. The second major argument focuses on such goals as uniting Ukrainian nation within Europe and securing the country. Becoming part of Europe is perceived not only as a result of domestic reforms but as a subject of a larger geopolitical context and closely intertwined with Russia, since one of the goals for opening up integration chances is to free the country from dependence on Russia. European reaction is also considered important, claiming that Ukraine must interest Europe in the country so it opens its doors.

The opposite category that rejects the idea of integration with the EU, develops two major categories: that the EU has unacceptable values and that the country will only acquire secondary status within the Union.

There is no common discourse on the Other as well. It should be noted though that Europe as Other does not exist yet. Despite the complains about Europe's superiority feeling towards the country and lack of interest, it is not characterized as a threatening Other. However, liberalism and ultra liberalism are mentioned as country's others that can be indirectly related to European values. European self also has multiple others from which Russia stands out. Ukrainians also believe that Soviet

past and Soviet mentality as well as leftover legacies are also obstacles on the country's way to Europe. But besides these domestic or external Others, political elites are also named as another impediment to European self.

The worldviews of surrounding environment, relations with Europe as well as solutions to existing issues seem to be correlating with the previous parts of identity discourse. The running theme remains Europe's attitude towards the country, country's position in relations with Europe and prospects of success in this relation goals. Major complain remains the Europe's attitude towards Ukraine, looking down at country, presenting harsh demands and putting country in a begging position. Within this critical position, Europe is also blamed for lack of knowledge about Ukraine, disinterest, considering it as a buffer zone, lack of support and avoiding membership perspective/closed doors. This lack of importance is countered by a claim that developments in Ukraine are in fact affecting Europe and thus it deserves enough attention. Europe on the other hand sees the country as irrelevant perceiving it as Asian and far from European standards.

This category is contested by claiming the opposite that Europe is interested in the country. While the former recognizes Ukraine as part of European family, it recognizes Ukraine's European perspective and the chances of joining Europe are also high. Three major policy proposals are accommodated in the discourse. First proposes a clear-cut choice, with the basis that Russia is on the opposite edge of Europe and suggests that the country chooses Europe over Russia. Second position suggests multivector foreign policy that accommodates both of the external actors. The third is more divided without a clear position, but suggests to carefully review the integration option with Europe and critically think about its worth without taking it as granted.

Building up on this discourse as a starting point, I will now follow the identified events in detail. First, I examine whether change took place or not to see if identified conditions conform the theory and then once the change is detected, what type and extent of change occurred. For this purpose, I look at the direction of change: whether it has become more or less pro-European (what happens to the opposite categories) and at the extent of change by looking at change in content, which parts of content change and to what extent. I examine not only the points of change and what is happening in the identified month/s but also I compare discourse at this point with the previous discourse to identify which arguments are foregrounded in discourse but also to see what changes within the categories in comparison to previous periods.

#### *European identity discourse during the selected events*

##### Critical junctures

Frequency analysis of pro and anti-European elements in the discourse confirms that changes occur during the crisis events. During each of the events either increase or decrease occurs in each of the elements, affecting the balance between the categories. Therefore, the static condition or no change does not characterize any of

the events. But interestingly enough none of the events mark disappearance of the opposite category, meaning that crisis events in Ukraine did not bring a complete transformation in the European identity discourse. Thus, at first glance we can say that crisis events in Ukraine account for partial change. But which direction does partial change take? Does it become more or less pro-European? The following section discusses frequency changes during each event; afterwards identifies major themes and arguments during those events and compares discourse with the previous periods to see if the event introduced or foregrounded the already existing discursive arguments.

### *Orange Revolution (November 2004 – January 2005)*

Frequency analysis shows that during the event a gap between the pro and anti-European discourses is significantly high, which means that the pro-European discourse was prevailing in terms of intensity during the revolution. Qualitative analysis shows that in its larger part, European identity discourse builds up on the previous discourse. The content change has not been a major sweep through the previously existing arguments but some of the settled arguments were in fact foregrounded while others backgrounded. However, to some extent there have also been changes.

Some of the critical characterizations of Europe such as comparison to the USSR, blaming on preferring interests over values, being economically behind and unable to act independently disappeared. Instead, Europe's economic prosperity and its attempt to act independently by escaping the US influence are emphasized. Geographical and other technical characterizations of country's Europeanness disappears and Europeanness on the level of civic culture remains. However, completely new to the older discourse, what becomes underlined is country's historical Europeanness as well it's special and unique role in European civilization. Country's aspirations are claimed to be grounds for belonging to Europe. Along with cultural and historical belongingness, another novelty is emphasis on country's importance to Europe. The speakers underline that what happens in country is affecting Europe. The opposite category once again continues with the argument that Europe is hub of inequality for its members and also sense of superiority towards other countries.

All the critical arguments disappear including the argument that Europe has unacceptable values. On the other hand, Europe becomes an entity, which is claimed to be irreversible choice and without alternative if Ukraine wants good future. Being more confident in country's grounds to belong to Europe, discourse emphasizes that the change to become a member is to change political elites, whereas reforms and democracy building as a prerequisite disappears from discourse.

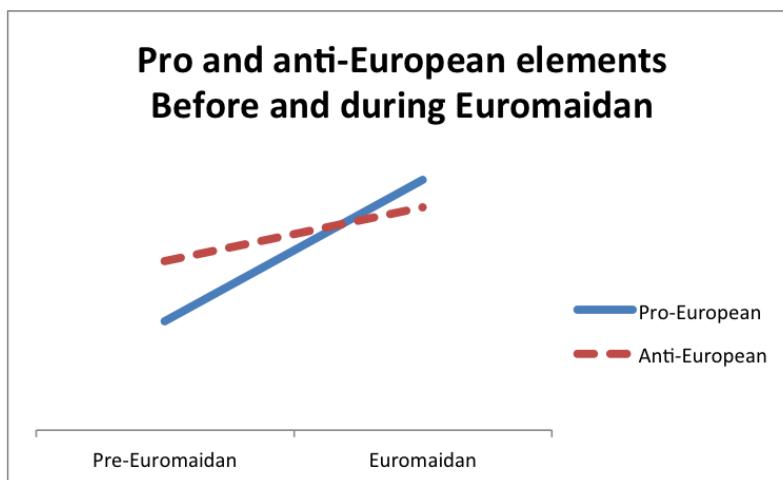
Major Others for the discourse during the Orange Revolution are Russia and Eurasian civilization as well as political elites of the country. Emergence of Eurasia as a cultural Other is new in comparison to the previous periods. Being the biggest Other, Russia is characterized as undemocratic.

. How Europe views the country is once again contested with opposite arguments that Europe considers Ukraine to be part of European family, while opposite discourse claims that Europe places Ukraine at the edge, as its neighbor and not as its member. Critics that country will never join Europe also emerges in discourse as well as that Europe does not care about Ukraine. This is countered with the opposite arguments that Europe realizes country's importance. On the former side, two major policy suggestions remain. One continues the argument of multivector policy and the second, newer, introduces the idea of independent, patriotic policy that is neither directed towards the West not to East.

Overall, it can be concluded that the discourse became more pro-European by foregrounding Europe-favouring arguments while many of anti-European arguments either disappeared or softened. Pro-European discourse introduced further value-based arguments on country's historical belonging to Europe and Othering Eurasian culture. This category also became more confident about belonging to Europe, claiming special role of Ukraine in European civilization and also importance of the country to Europe. The opposite discourse remained critical, but the major arguments emphasized Europe's unwillingness to accept country and its indifference, but lost the arguments on unacceptable European values and incompatibility because of Eastern Orthodoxy. Maintaining multivector policy as an option, a new argument of patriotic policy, which is more nationalist in character without choosing any direction.

#### *Euromaidan (21 November 2013 – 21 February 2014)*

Euromaidan event lasted for three months in Ukraine from 21 November 2013 to 21 February 2014. These three months were selected for the target of analysis and firstly they were compared to the discourse during the preceding three months to detect frequency changes in pro and anti-European elements within the discourse. Afterwards, I outlined major categories and elements in the discourse during these three months and lastly, compared to the overall discourse from January 2004 to 21 November 2013 to detect changes that the event provoked in the identity categories.



Frequency analysis showed that the event marked quite a sharp increase in both, anti and pro-European discourses. This indicates at the increased contestation level

and that Euromaidan did not necessarily result in any dominant discourse, but the opposite, on further increase in disagreement. Further changes within contestation and direction of change can be detected through qualitative analysis of texts.

The discourse marks quite radical arguments and high contestation over meanings of Europe and country's Europeanness. Whereas one category characterizes Europe as merge of positive values including democracy, the critical category calls Europe imperialist, compares it to the USSR, describes it as being in not only political and economic but also in value crisis and says that Europe is even betraying true European values. Something new that the discourse introduces is in fact within the pro-European camp saying that Europe is more than just economy, it is unity of certain values and even high Christian values among them.

Referring to this value crisis that the critical category emphasizes, they portray Ukraine as being even more European than Europe itself. The extent of country's belongingness towards Europe is again debated varying from culturally, historically European (which also says that Ukraine has a unique role in European civilization) to mixture of European and Asian and with different mentality from Europe. Being culturally more close to Russia is also part of the discourse. Revolution is again brought as an example for demonstrating country's Europeanness and belonging to this entity, while being European for the critical discourse means stirring a civil war, similar to Syria.

Main purposes for joining Europe are characterized within such terms as reforms, modernization, achieving high social standards but also for realizing country's historical dream. This position also includes arguments that in European family Ukraine can contribute spiritually. The main goal to be achieved in order to join Europe (unlike previous periods when it was reforms) is to in fact construct a firm nation that is united with the idea. The skeptic stand refers to economic threats from Europe, that expectations will not be fulfilled from integration and that the country can develop also without integration.

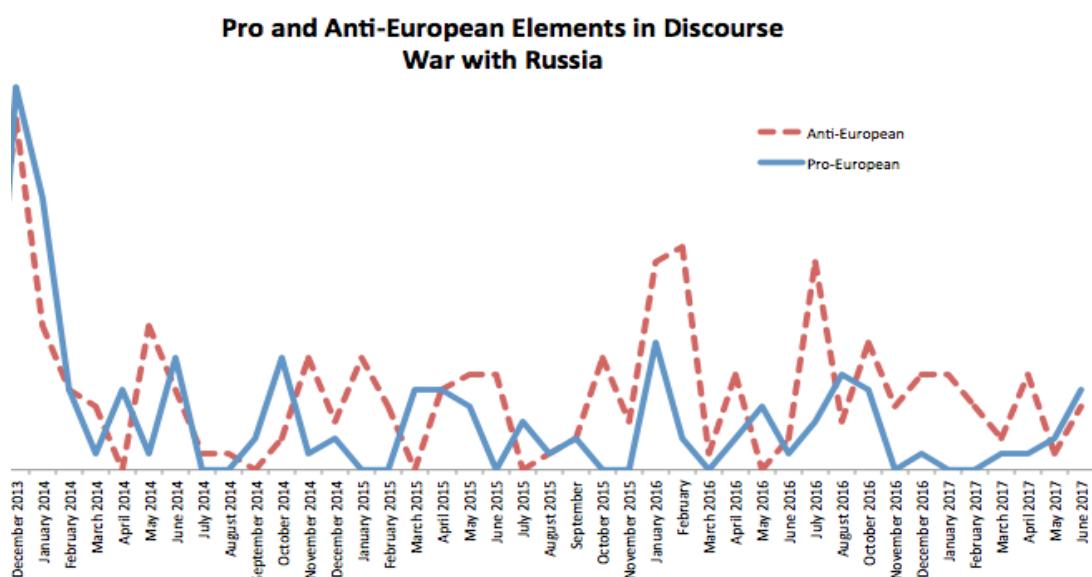
The main Others for the European self are Eurasian civilization, Soviet mentality and political elites of the country. In line with the previous discourse major threats from Europe remain threats to economy and sovereignty of Ukraine. But here the discourse also introduces new elements. First time, country's nationalists become Other to the Self. On the other hand, another novelty is portrayal of Russia as being dependent on Ukraine for maintaining Europeanness, stating that Russia would become Asian power without Ukraine. Also novelty is Russia's characterization as viewing Ukraine as source of its interests.

Europe's image of the country and perception of relations with Europe are again highly contested. While one category thinks that Europe considers country as part of European family and important country, others claim that Europe views the country as only second world state and considers it as source for its interests. In addition, the argument that for Europe country is connecting Europe and Asia also persists. As for the relations, positions vary also radically. The following arguments appear in the discourse: Europe intentionally pushes country towards degradation,

country is begging Europe whereas Europe will not allow country to join, Europe does not support country enough, absence of support is also an example from the past, Europe is country's role model for development. In terms of policy, all the possible policy options show up during Euromaidan. A new element that appears in discourse which refers to Euromaidan as expression for European values and fight for them which Europe itself has forgotten what it is like. Therefore, Ukraine has become a moral check for Europe. In relation with the latter another new element is a proposal that country should have its own values instead. The first insists on Europe's active policy and that it should do more in terms of support. Here, the new element of the policy proposal is that Europe should in fact follow European values in relation with country. Second claims that country should not just copy things from Europe. In terms of Russia, there are two policy proposals. First proposes that Russia in fact is included in the European integration process by Ukraine. Second simply chooses Russia over Europe and proposes that Ukraine gets along with its neighbor. Alternative policy is also part of the discourse in which speakers suggest that Ukraine should create a new European space. And lastly, there is an option of choosing neither Russia nor Europe.

#### *War with Russia (21 February 2014 – 30 June 2017)*

War with Russia is counted from the time that annexation of Crimea started. The events started developing already after Yanukovych fled the country and with escalations at some points and de-escalations it has been going on since then. However, since my data collection ends with 30 June 2017, this date is also the last point of analysis, including 40 months of war with Russia as major target for examination.



Firstly, I performed frequency analysis of the anti and pro-European elements. Overall, there is a large fluctuation during these 40 months when either of them interchangeably differ in terms of frequency however, none of them disappears and eventually both elements remain within the discourse. This means that the event did

not cause disappearance of contestation. But to what extent contestation over content has changed is analyzed qualitatively below. Since the data is vast due to large time period, the analysis mainly focuses on appearance or disappearance of certain elements within the discourse and also general mapping of discourse but in a less detailed manner.

In terms of attributes to Europe, while pro-European category underlines Europe as a desirable entity to be part of, with successful harmony of different nations and hub of freedom, critical discourse increases emphasis on value part of Europe. The major arguments underline that Europe is in value crisis, betraying true European values, interests take over values and thus modern Europe is different from the previous one. However, referring back to history Europe is still portrayed as immoral even back then with exploitative characteristics calling Europe a historical enemy that continues today in its imperialist character and sense of superiority. Being in crisis, Europe is considered to be disintegrating. A new element that enters the discourse is that Europe is building walls and closing up. The opposite discourse has completely opposite arguments that in fact Europe is a successful project and it is progressing.

Country's belonging to Europe is again contested, varying between mixture of European and Asian and being historically, culturally and politically European (the latter is also contested). At the same time the argument that country is more European (since Europe is betraying its values) than Europe is also part of the discourse. The new elements appearing are stating that Europe is also partly Slavic and east and west Europeans differ.

Country's position in Europe is again portrayed with a unique role of Ukraine in European civilization and emphasizing that what happens in country affects Europe. The new argument appearing is that country can offer solution to European value crisis. Being European is portrayed as being tolerant and first time, compatible with country's nationalism. For the critical discourse, being European means losing traditions, feeling inferior to Europe, isolation and conflict with Russia, economic issues, split within country, allowing homosexuality. For the first time critical discourse emphasizes the following arguments of being European: integration has only brought disappointment and worse conditions than before, Ukraine is the poorest country in Europe, loses freedom and independence and only feeling European does not bring any results.

Grounds for belonging are largely value and culture based emphasizing common culture, common history, vision and aspirations and the justification that revolution abolished obstacles for joining. Completely opposite is claimed by anti-European discourse that country does not belong to Europe because of different history, Eastern Orthodoxy and different mentality.

Grounds for belonging to Europe in the future include people's wish to join, that country will be secure and solve conflicts and Ukraine will realize its historical dream. The opposite includes arguments that country will take secondary status

within Europe, it will threaten its economy and Europe has unacceptable values. Moreover, country will reject other alternatives.

In order to join, Europe is also named as an important actor to actually open its doors and recognize country's achievements. But also change in mentality is another means for joining. To get along with Russia for this goal is also part of discourse. Opposite visions are present in the discourse about country's position within the European family. While one claims that the country will have equal and dignified place among other members, the opposite that country will have inferior and secondary status is also claimed.

Nationalists are again named as Others for the country. Eurasian civilization, Russia and Soviet mentality remain main Others for European self. Threats from Europe include both economic, sovereignty and value threats to identity by threatening religion. For the first time, Russia is brought as an example of higher values since it resisted homosexuality.

Europe is considered to be viewing country as part of European family and part of European history and developments. On the other hand, critics say that Europe views country as source of its interests. Chances of joining Europe remain on pessimistic level that they are vague or country will never join Europe. In relations with Europe, it is considered that developments in country affect Europe, country has become moral check for Europe, Europe's problems are country's problems, in some areas country is superior and in some Europe. The new elements also appear including the arguments that Europe does not need country's reforms (it is country that needs them), Eurocentric world is over and country has made up its mind while Europe is indecisive. Europe is also blamed for the events in country, for the conflict and intentional push towards degradation, that Europe cares only for its own interests with double standards towards Ukraine, people were told lies about Europe and country is begging Europe while serving its interests while Europe gives country instructions; people are not all pro-European. For the first time the arguments appear that people were misinformed about true European values. On the positive side, country is considered in the middle of European developments, Europe is a role model and they have mutual interests. Europe is portrayed as divided over willingness to let country join or not willing at all. There are three opinions over Europe's support: Europe does support, does not support and Europe is limited in its capabilities and is confused.

Lastly, policy options vary from modifying values by getting rid off some outdated ones and merging European and local values to getting along with Russia, Europragmatism and rejecting illusions about Europe, to no black and white approach (not ideal constructions of European or enemy of European) and relations both with Europe and Russia and to more Europe in country and more country in Europe. A new element is to understand Europe well as well as its problems. What does not appear any more is to choose Russia over Europe. Even though getting along with Russia is still part of the discourse, it only remains until May 2014 and disappears afterwards.

Overall, the discourse during the war remains contested as both pro and anti-European elements remain within the discourse and it can be said that also quite radical arguments coexist within the categories. One thing that overall softens the critical position is losing the foreign policy proposal of choosing Russia over Europe. Instead, they argue for Euroscepticism and careful consideration of integration since the latter is considered to be the cause of the conflict and split within the country as well as disappointment overall in its results. The option of keeping relations both with Europe and Russia remains in the discourse. But the major debates within the discourse are not only around conflicts but they are excessively value-oriented. Europe is largely becoming portrayed as being in value crisis, betraying European values and becoming a hub of unacceptable values such as homosexuality. First time ever, the discourse uses Russia as a role model for resisting homosexuality in the country. In this context, Ukraine is portrayed as a country that is even superior to Europe in values and can offer solution to this ongoing value crisis.

The opposite discourse still continues to support integration with Europe with major focus on conflict solution and security that are considered as solvable by integration. Being European and European self are portrayed as being compatible with nationalism (mentioned first time) in Ukraine meaning the split within identities since Europeanness means tolerance.

Most of the discourse remains skeptical to Europe for being disinterested, not considering country as important, not supporting. Small number of speakers praise Europe for support or justify it with not having necessary means for action. Another major debate persists around inferiority/superiority issue that country will only remain on the secondary status level within Europe. And finally, first time in the discourse the critical category states that it is the end of Eurocentric world.

#### External actor reaction

##### *EU reactions*

Out of multiple events that Ukraine and the European Union shared during the observed 14 years, I have selected five that are not exhaustive but can demonstrate general trends of development within the discourse. Since all of them are one day events, I decided to sample articles during one week before the event since debates would already start beforehand and a month/four weeks after the event. Overall five weeks around each event. To show general trends of development, I performed frequency analysis of codes during these five weeks in comparison to the previous five weeks. Afterwards I had a look at the overall data to qualitatively examine major arguments during these events and compare them not only to each other but also to the whole previous period (since January 2004 until the event) in order to detect changes within discourse and its categories.

The following five events were analysed:

1. ENP: European Neighbourhood Policy adopted by the EU and Ukraine - 21.02.2005
2. EaP: Eastern Partnership (EaP) inaugurated - 07.05.2009

3. Association Agreement (AA): AA – 30.03.2012

4. DCFTA: DCFTA came into force - 01.01.2016

5. Visa: The EU granted visa liberalization - 11.06.2017

Frequency analysis shows that during all the five events both anti and pro-European elements remain. In fact, in majority of cases anti-European elements elevate along with pro-European. This means that contestation does not disappear but in fact increases. This trend supports the argument that EU reactions even though they are all positive in this case, provoke not only supportive categories within the identity discourse but also critical stands.

Qualitative analysis shows that none of the five events changed the discourse dramatically. Despite some new elements that they introduced, most of the discourse still relied on the previous existing identity categories. Contestation remains on all the levels except about country's Europeanness. The change is mainly detected over increase and foregrounding of some already existing arguments and few new ones.

Within defining Europe and its attributes, belonging or not belonging to Europe and justification for that, critical category underlines material side of Europe and that interests often take over the values within this entity (EaP, AA and DCFTA). Over time the initial idea that Europe is not an independent player disappears and it is replaced with a negative connotation of European policies that its aim is monopolization (AA and DCFTA). Since 2012, the events foreground an argument that modern Europe radically differs from the previous Europe to which in fact Ukraine wanted to belong but now feels the opposite. During the last two events (DCFTA and Visa) Europe is mainly characterized as an entity in political, economic and even value crisis. The events always activate debates on the level of countries Europeanness. In this terms several different arguments emerge: that country is not European (because of different historical experience, Eastern Orthodoxy) (ENP, DCFTA, Visa), neither European nor Russian (Visa), that country is a mixture between European and Asian cultures (ENP), country partly European, either culturally or historically (EaP, AA, DCFTA, Visa) but all agree that Ukraine is not politically European and the latter does not change throughout different events. The category that claims country's Europeanness states that country's current vision and future aspirations are good enough justification for belonging to Europe (EaP, AA, DCFTA) often brought revolutions as examples of such aspirations.

Those who choose Europe, mainly foreground the justification that Europe is the only choice and other alternatives only account for bad future for the country (EaP). The opposite category mainly constructs European integration as an illusion that will fail to fulfill expectations (ENP, AA) and they mainly refer to economic issues that will follow either closer cooperation or integration (ENP, EaP, DCFTA). Related issue that emerges especially after 2016 is also economy related and stems from the idea that getting closer to Europe will result in demographic decline. Second biggest threat and reason for not joining Europe that emerges in discourse is threat to

sovereignty and independence (ENP, EaP, DCFTA). Even though material interests dominate in countering European integration, value-based arguments also emerge especially during the last events (DCFTA, AA). These arguments include the idea that becoming European means losing traditions, including those related to religious practices.

Russia remains the main Other in the European identity discourse. Russia is usually countered by Europe that is pictured to be threatening country's economy, sovereignty and traditions/religion (ENP, EaP, AA, DCFTA).

Vision of the political, economic and social conditions differ in the discourse during the selected five events. But in two issues categories intersect. There is an agreement to some extent that Europe is closed towards the country, it does not support Ukraine, is not interested and seeing the country as only a neighbor, membership perspective is quite vague (ENP, DCFTA) despite Ukraine being a frontrunner among the Eastern Partnership countries (EaP). Second agreement falls on the topic that Europe is encountering problems (DCFTA, Visa) but whereas the critical category then proposes avoiding close relations, pro-European discourse suggests to try and understand Europe well including its problems (DCFTA). Critical discourse also emphasizes value issues and crisis that Europe encounters and in this context Ukraine is characterized as superior in relation to the values that it holds and can offer. In fact, the country is even portrayed as a moral value check for Europe (Visa). Proposed policies also differ between the options of integration with a slogan of "more Europe in Ukraine and more Ukraine in Europe" (Visa), act on its own and solve its own issues without integration (EaP), allow some European but also maintain its own (AA) and choose Russia over Europe (AA).

Overall, besides the change in terms of increased contestation/fluidity, there are some new elements that discourse around these events introduced and that were not part of the previous discourse. Threats from Europe towards country's economy and sovereignty first emerge during the ENP event. During active European participation, critical discourse is also introducing the arguments that Europe views Ukraine as source for its interests and Europe is aiming at monopolization (EaP, AA). During the AA event, also critical discourse introduces the idea that modern Europe is already different from its previous version and in fact, it was the previous Europe that Ukraine wanted to belong to. And lastly, during the DCFTA event, which is economic in character, the argument that Europe is in economic and political crisis also became part of the discourse.

### *Russian reactions*

Four events were selected representing Russian reactions towards Ukraine. The events can be grouped into negative and rather positive reactions. The first two include "gas wars" when Russia cut off gas supply to Ukraine. The other two events are more mixed, since signing the Kharkiv Pact was a mutual agreement between the two countries that extended Russian presence in Ukraine but in exchange of more favourable gas tariffs (at the time, even though later it was not put in action). The last event of Putin's visit to Kiev includes an offer to join the Customs Union which

is also a mixed event in its character and supposing to stir some debates around it. Time period for each event is the month of their happening. The gas wars started on the beginning of months, therefore I account for the actual day of gas cut off and the next four weeks. For the agreement and visit, even though they took place in the second and third week of the months, selecting the whole month for the analysis will include debates proceeding as well as the event and at least one week afterwards. Therefore, the targeted months of analysis were January 2006, January 2009, April 2010 and April 2011. Firstly, discourse in these months was compared to the discourse in the preceding one month to detect elevation or decrease of the discourse in terms of frequency. Secondly, qualitative analysis was performed in which I compared the discourse during each of the selected months to the whole preceding discourse from January 2004 until the month of the event to detect changes that were introduced. Lastly, I looked at the whole discourse during all the events to detect what type of arguments are foregrounded and which are silenced.

The events include:

1. I gas war - First "gas war" - 01- 04.01.2006
2. II gas war - Second "gas war" – 2 - 20.01.2009
3. Kharkiv - Kharkiv Pact – 21.04.2010
4. Visit - Putin`s visit to Kiev and offer on Customs Union – 12.04.2011

Frequency analysis shows that in all the selected cases pro-European elements tend to elevate in discourse while anti-European elements decrease. This means that contestation decreases while anti-European category within the discourse becomes more silenced and pro-European elements take over. Russian reactions seem to be provoking more pro-European elements. The extent of change can be defined within the qualitative analysis.

The discourse around the events relies on the previous discourse elements but also introduces new elements. Disagreement over characterizing Europe continues. The features vary from community of civic values, great civilization and economically prosperous community (I gas war, Kharkiv, Visit), hub of freedom (Visit) to a community which is in value crisis (Kharkiv), promoting wrong values such as homosexuality (Kharkiv) to being imperialist and hub of inequality with sense of superiority towards other countries (Visit). Country`s belonging to Europeanness however, is not completely denied. The levels of belonging though are different. Mostly Ukraine is considered not to be politically European yet, exception being the Visit. Otherwise Ukraine is claimed to be culturally European (I gas war, Visit), historically European (Visit) and mixture of European and Asian civilizations (Visit). New elements that the events provoke in discourse include self-reference as post-communist, that striving to be European causes split within the country and most importantly, debate over country`s location and its importance. The latter argues that country has a special location between Russia and Europe and plays/can play an important role in their relations.

Country's grounds for belonging to Europe is stated to be economic prosperity (I gas war) but also because Europe is the country's irreversible choice without any alternative. In order to join Europe, Ukraine has to aim mainly at interesting Europe in the country (I gas war, II gas war) but also at developing economically and democratically (Visit). The events provoke the arguments about country's vision in European family and here seems to be having a special role and position within Europe. Ukraine can become center of European civilization (Kharkiv) and a role model of symbiosis of Eastern and Western culture (Visit). The new element that enters the discourse relates to Europe being in spiritual and value crisis. In this regards, Ukraine is portrayed as a country in opposite condition that can contribute to Europe with its values (Kharkiv).

Interestingly, during these events Eurasian Economic Union becomes an Other (I gas war). At the same time, ideological Others are also mentioned including Soviet past (I gas war, Visit) and authoritarianism (Visit). During the Putin's visit Russia is also characterized as somewhat European historically and by its experience in some areas as Europe itself recognizes so.

Disagreement about Europe's attitude and offers towards the country remain within the discourse. The positions vary from Europe being reluctant and trying to avoid membership (I gas war, II gas war, visit) to Europe being divided on the topic (II gas war) and Europe in fact recognizing Ukraine's European perspective and offering more support by more active involvement (I gas war, II gas war). The critical elements also include the argument that not only Europe is absent now but also in the past. The discourse also accommodates the criticism towards the EU policy that Ukraine is placed within a wrong group, meaning Eastern Partnership group (Visit). During the Kharkiv event, the element that nationalist in the country provoke conflict between Russia and Europe emerged. In terms of proposed policies, here the positions also vary. One category places all the weight on Europe and proposing that the EU should offer membership (Visit). Others claim that Ukraine itself should engage with more active policy with Europe (I gas war) and choose other alternative by remaining in between Russia and Europe and instead play a role of their connector economically (Kharkiv). The new elements that appeared during these events included that Europe is interested in Ukraine only for the sake of its own interests (I gas war), that Europe views the country as other Europe and not necessarily as its part (Visit), the proposal of increased interaction from the country's side (I gas war) and that country is capable of spiritually contributing to Europe (Kharkiv).

Overall, during the Russian reactions, the discourse is generally becoming dominated by pro-European elements. However, anti-European elements do not completely disappear. The new elements emerge within the both categories and concern both value and materialistic reasoning. During the events, Europe becomes blamed for caring for its interests in relation to Ukraine, that it does not really view Ukraine as proper European. In fact, Europeanness and strive for it is claimed to be causing split within the country. While European value crisis is part of the discourse, the new initiative includes the proposal that Ukraine can offer proper values to

Europe and in fact contribute spiritually. Other position comes closer to the idea, claiming that Ukraine can become part of European civilization within the European family. What emerges in terms of policies, is the idea that Ukraine itself should be engaged with more active policy with Europe. And lastly, during the Putin's visit and offer on joining the Customs Union, the idea about Ukraine's special function and location and linking Russia and Europe becomes a new element within the discourse.

## 6 Conclusion

Analysis of the European identity discourse in Ukraine during 2004 – 2017 showed that the discourse remains contested over time as different events unfold. Both pro- and anti-European elements remain and compete with each other, however, with some fluctuation depending on the event. At the same time, while contestation varies, content hardly changes. Different actors use the previous arguments and narratives to reinterpret the events and few new elements largely fall within the major mood of each identity category. Therefore, while some events, especially the potential critical junctures do instigate change, the extent of change is rather partial rather than a complete transformation.

During all the selected events at least one of the categories (pro-European and anti-European) become activated, which confirms their relevance for the European identity discourse. Out of the two event groups, the critical juncture events are capable of instigating the most change. While the Euromaidan has tremendously increased the frequency of debates of Ukraine's belonging to Europe, it was the Orange Revolution and the war with Russia that introduced the relative dominance of the pro-European discourse.

During the Orange Revolution, pro-European discourse has increasingly foregrounded the arguments of country's historical belonging to Europe and perceived the revolution as a confirmation of Ukraine's dedication to European values. Accordingly, going to such an extent for European values (democracy, freedom, etc.) has demonstrated the country's special role in European civilization. While the opposite discourse has also persisted, it has silenced some of its critical arguments or softened them. The arguments over unacceptable European values have disappeared but the criticism of Europe's unwillingness to accept Ukraine has elevated. Thus, they still found a room for their proposal of a multivector foreign policy in opposition to exclusively pro-European policy. As a result of losing some critical arguments, contestation has somewhat decreased in favor of the pro-European identity discourse. On the other hand, Euromaidan saw a stark frequency increase in both pro- and anti-European elements. The event, similar to the Orange revolution, was interpreted as a special achievement of Ukraine and its dedication to European values. In response, pro-Europeans demanded more support and recognition from Europe. The opposite discourse constructed the protestors as nationalist and fascist enemies and criticized Europe for their support. While the

European identity discourse has become prominent in the country, the contestation persisted and despite a few new elements, the event was also interpreted within the pre-existing arguments. Lastly, the war with Russia also saw persistence of both pro- and anti-European elements. However, a significant change has taken place in the propositions for country's foreign policy. As a result of the war, the option of choosing Russia over Europe as a main ally completely disappears from the discourse. The only opposite choice of pro-European policy remains rejection of Europe or trying to settle relations with Russia while also holding a pro-European direction. Therefore, contestation has changed in favor of the pro-European discourse.

External actor reactions also activated the European identity discourse, however, without any dramatic changes. During the events from the EU, both pro- and anti-European elements increase in quantity, meaning that the EU policies in the country, even if positively perceived by pro-Europeans, also provoke critical stands. Despite few new elements, both discourses largely relied on the previous core identity arguments. Some new elements include the threats from Europe to country's economy during the ENP; Europe attempting to monopolize its interests in Ukraine during the EaP and the AA and that modern Europe is different from the historical one in a negative way, thus less desirable. During the DCFTA, the argument about Europe being in an economic crisis has also emerged. During the events from Russia, it is pro-European elements that are especially provoked. Some new elements emerge within both discourses. According to anti-Europeans, the strive to be claimed as European is creating conflicts and divisions in Ukraine. On the other hand, Ukraine, with its special role in European civilization, is believed to be able to contribute and offer a solution to Europe's value crisis. During the Russian offer to join the Customs Union, the idea of Ukraine's special function of linking Russia and Europe also appears.

In sum, European identity discourse remains contested in Ukraine. Such large events as the Orange Revolution and the War with Russia has somewhat skewed this contestation in favor of the pro-European discourse. However, the opposite discourse similarly persisted, even though with less frequency. On the other hand, external actor reactions do instigate some respond but any considerable change. An interesting finding is that, foreign actor actions especially find response in critical discourses. While the EU causes reactions from Eurosceptics, Russia-related events are particularly picked up by pro-Europeans. In general, despite some fluctuation in the contestation over European identity, identity content seems the hardest to change. The anti- and pro-European discourses maintain their core elements over years and despite a few new ideas, their understanding of belonging to Europe or major Other persist. Actors seem to stick to their discourses despite different events and try to adjust to the new reality by paraphrasing the old narratives.

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## About the Author

**Salome Minesashvili** was a visiting fellow at Europa-Kolleg Hamburg within the "Europe and Beyond" Fellowship Program which is part of the cooperation between Europa-Kolleg Hamburg and Bundeskanzler-Helmut-Schmidt Foundation and is financed through the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg. Ms. Minesashvili holds a doctoral degree in Political Science from the Freie Universität Berlin (FU Berlin) and currently is a lecturer of Politics and International Relations at the FU Berlin and ESCP Europe.

**Contact:** [s.minesashvili@transnationalstudies.eu](mailto:s.minesashvili@transnationalstudies.eu)

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**Editors**

Europa-Kolleg Hamburg  
Institute for European Integration  
Prof. Dr. Jörg Philipp Terhechte, Managing Director  
Dr. Andreas Grimmel, Research Director  
Windmühlenweg 27  
22607 Hamburg, Germany  
<http://www.europa-kolleg-hamburg.de>

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