SHOTA KAKABADZE

"The Caucasian Chalk Circle":
Georgia's Self at the East/West Nexus

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"The social scientist is in a difficult, if not impossible, position. On the one hand, there is the temptation to see all of society as one's autobiography writ large, surely not the path to general truth. On the other hand, there is the attempt to be general and objective by pretending that one knows nothing about the experience of being human…"

(Richard Lewontin*, 2000, p. 252)

INTRODUCTION

It is said that when you visit Georgia for the first time, there are two questions you are usually asked: 'How do you like our food?' and 'Do you think Georgia is Europe or Asia?' The following study is not an attempt to provide an answer to either one of these questions, but rather it tries to uncover the origin of Georgian society's insecurity about its positioning in the East/West nexus and how such positioning is employed by the two competing narratives in the processes of identity production. I conceptualize this stage of transition, being neither here nor there, as liminality and attempt to examine how various interest groups inside the state (liberals and populists[1] in this case) make use of such positioning. How do two contradicting discourses produce and reproduce different identities, such as European/Western versus Eastern/Caucasian/non-European and how these discourses shape foreign policy goals?

These tensions between identity and foreign policy trajectories became especially apparent with the NATO and EU enlargement to the East. As these institutions expanded, they discovered themselves sharing borders with such countries as Georgia, Ukraine or Moldova. With the appearance of the new Others on the horizon, perception of the Self from both sides was also altered. In 2018 *National Geographic Georgia* published an article by an anthropologist Nutsa Batiashvili (2018) with the same title as her book, "The Bivocal Nation." Batiashvili compares the Georgian Self to Schrodinger's cat, composed of two mutually exclusive things:

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[1] I am following Laclau's understanding of populism as being in opposition to civic national identity conception. As he argues, the institutionalized discourse limits discursive formation within the limits of the community, while populist discourse splits the society into two. "The people" as a signifier, in populist articulation, "is something less than the totality of members of the community" (2005, p. 81). "The people" representing the only legitimate totality, in fact, is only a part of given society (Zeemann, 2019, p. 43). Furthermore, what I identify as a populist discourse is characterized with disdain of the so-called elites and call for popular sovereignty. My empirics on this matter are not constrained by any ideological believes (left or right) since I do not intend to engage with actual scholarly debates on populism, but rather analyze the discourse which shares the core element of anti-elitism even if they disagree on who is to be blamed. That is why in the second empirical chapter of the following thesis one could find anti-Western sentiments, along with fascination with Donald Trump or "true Europe." Thus, we can understand populism as a skeleton (consisting of anti-establishment sentiments and demands for popular sovereignty), which is later on filled with different, and in some cases even contradictory, ideologies.

Hero and anti-hero civilized and backward, cultured and uncultured. This is the syndrome of nations at the edge of empires, that political and cultural, at the same time, is always geopolitical, since in this case faith (orthodox Christianity) and habitus (nose piercing) is pointing not only to the moral or lifestyle but to geopolitical orientation (ibid).

This juxtaposition of two conceptions of national Self is evocatively illustrated by the image published together with the article which caused quite a discussion among the public. The caricature depicts a Georgian man in the shape of the two-headed god Janus. On the right side is a neatly shaved face holding a smartphone. The flag of the European Union, electricity, education, travel, pizza, cocktail and even a condom (possibly hinting at the open-minded approach to pre-marital sexual intercourse). This "civilized" and "progressive" man juxtaposed with a bearded man face who holds a traditional Georgian drinking horn, is poor (wearing old, ragged pants), is using drugs, and adores Stalin. Even the choice of fruits in the picture is an interesting juxtaposition – a more exotic and foreign banana is juxtaposed with an apple, albeit more organic in the Georgian climate.

In her book, Batiashvili argues that both memory narratives as identity constructs and strategies of political reasoning are articulated through two distinct stories, that of self-idealization and self-condemnation (2018b, p. XV). Within this fragmentation and "a constant tension between versions of "us" the Georgian Self is being imagined. Meanwhile, these different versions themselves are shaped by culturally pre-given discursive practices" (ibid, p. XVIII).

This dichotomy depicted in the caricature and elaborated in Batiashvili's book provides the starting point of my research. What I am arguing in this thesis is that such ambiguity emerges from liminal positioning between the two civilizational projects. This 'in-betweenness' makes possible such a radical juxtaposition of two poles as Stalin and the European Union, wine and a cocktail or an oil lamp and electricity, exclusive of each other. In this research, I am studying how the articulation of national identity happens at both ends of the spectrum and how these articulations constitute and in turn, are constituted by, foreign policy trajectories.

In his study of the use of military force by Russia in Abkhazia, Ted Hopf argued that different understandings of legitimacy are the products of the different identities of Russia. The national identity itself is the result of simultaneous interaction between domestic and international constructions of the Self (Hopf, 2005, p. 225). In his article, Hopf claims that there were three main parallel constructions of national identity in Russia in the 1990s: Liberal, Centrist, and Conservative. Certain actions and policies abroad were constituted legitimate or illegitimate according to the one which was dominant at the moment. To quote Hopf (ibid, p. 227): "The puzzle in this article is to understand how such conduct became possible. The answer is that Russian identity made it possible." Certain policy outcomes were made possible through the Russian identity being constructed in relationship with domestic and external significant others. Lisel

Hintz in her 2016 publication ""Take it outside!" National identity contestation in the foreign policy arena" develops a similar line of arguments by suggesting that there are three distinct identity proposals in Turkey (western liberalism, republican nationalism and Ottoman Islamism) and that when "identity gambits" on the domestic level are blocked, elites tend to take it into the foreign policy arena. I discuss her framework and its applicability within the scope of my research in greater length in the theoretical chapter later on.

My study follows this conception of identity/foreign policy relationship and examines how liberal and populist discursive constructions make sense of the Self at the point of the geopolitical East/West nexus. As is argued in most of the literature which deals with the issues of identity production, in order to understand oneself, you need to define it in reference to the external Other. Or as Neumann (1996, p. 1) puts it:

> Identity doesn't reside in essential and readily identifiable cultural traits but in relations, and the question of where and how borders towards 'the Other' should be drawn therefore become crucial.

In this study, I explore this identity construction in the context of the EU's increasing engagement with its Eastern neighbours, especially since the enlargement of 2004 and the appearance of the so-called "ring of friends." As I conceptualize the countries in between the European Union and Russia as liminals, I argue that this discourse was amplified with membership perspectives for CEE countries becoming more definite along with the new hopes of transformation brought by the waves of colour revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine. Once the transition or "journey back home" was completed for Central and Eastern European states, the torch of liminality was transferred farther to the east to their neighbours. As the CEE countries joined NATO and the EU, "the East" moved further and deeper into the territory of the former Soviet Union.

Some states have been living within this context already for decades and have become used to such perceptions from the West. An example of such a long-term liminal country is Turkey, while for countries such as Georgia or Ukraine, such positioning of their identity is relatively new. Ukraine joined the Council of Europe only in 1995, while Georgia did so even later, in 1999, unlike Turkey, which has been a member since 1950 and an EU candidate country for more than three decades. Unlike the former, post-Soviet states came into the immediate neighbourhood of the EU only after the so-called 'big bang' of 2004, when 10 states, most of them from East and Central Europe, joined the union. In other words, with the enlargement of the European Union further to the east, new elements and points of reference come into picture for identity discourses in the eastern neighbouring countries. Liminal spatial and temporal dimensions keep expanding and altering the conceptions of the Self.

Furthermore, I am arguing in this study that the anthropological concept of liminality i.e. of transition which was later theorized by the political scientists as a permanent transitional state (see the theoretical chapter) can become an

important tool in the hands of small states to guide themselves in the contemporary international system. The self-conception guides foreign policy and where the country sees itself within the East/West nexus. This is amplified by the reproduction of civilizational discourse that helps to locate the Self at the global, regional or individual level (O'Hagan, 2007, p. 22). For example, by contributing to the NATO missions in Afghanistan or the EU's mission to Central Africa, Georgian liberal discourse reproduces its European identity by being in the same team as the West; claiming that military operation in Afghanistan serves the national interests of Georgia. It puts Georgia along with "civilized" nations in opposition to "uncivilized" and "barbarian" terrorists. The Georgian military, along with allies from the West contributes to security all around the globe ("What are Georgian…", 2016). Meanwhile, challenging this are populist discursive attempts to portray these developments as "the war of others, strangers" which Georgians have nothing to do with and consequently, argue for the withdrawal[2].

Based on the outline of the two poles of the narrative, the current study addresses the following research question:

How is the liminal positioning of Georgia articulated in the public discourse, based on the geographical, cultural, historical and social circumstances?
A number of sub-questions further guide this study's focus on foreign policy/ identity relationship:

a) *What is the role of the liminal identity in the articulation of mutually exclusive discourse of national identity (i.e. liberal and populist)? How the latter challenges the dominant liberal discourse through the reproduction of alternative Georgian national identity?*
b) *How are foreign policy goals and security issues interlinked with identity discourses and how do they mutually (re)produce each other?*
c) *How does the European Union's policy towards the Eastern neighbours contribute to maintaining a sense liminality in the countries on its eastern border?*

Even though the research questions I put forward are of a descriptive character, the following wording of what this thesis is exploring is justified from the ontological and epistemological perspective of the theoretical as well as the methodological frameworks. My study falls within the broader spectrum of the poststructuralist scholarship as it applies methodological tools of discourse analysis developed in the works of Laclau and Mouffe (1985, 1990), Hansen (2006) as well Wæver (2002, 2004) and Doty (1993, 1996, 1996b). It is important to note that most of the discourse-analytical approaches, despite critique from the positivist methodological school, can go beyond simply offering a critical problematization of the issue to the explanatory level, which itself "must be

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[2]   Subchapter 5.5 provides detailed illustration of this narrative

seen as constitutive rather than causal" (Diez, 2014, p. 31). Such constitutive effects of discourse help to explain how particular policies were enabled through the meaning construction processes. In other words, what Doty (1993) argues, instead of asking 'why-questions', posing 'how-possible questions' makes the analysis of foreign policy more substantial. Unlike the former, which presupposes a certain social and discursive background as unproblematic, the latter examines the meaning production processes and thus tries to explain not "why a particular outcome was obtained, but rather how the subjects, objects, and interpretive dispositions were socially constructed such that certain practices were made possible" (ibid, p. 298).

Analyses from 'how possible questions' help to examine not only how social identities become constructed, but also what practices and policies are made possible. 'Why questions' presuppose identities of social actors and a background of social meanings, while "how questions examine how meanings are produced and attached to various social subjects and objects, thus constituting particular interpretive dispositions that create certain possibilities and preclude others" (Doty, 1996, p. 4).

In order for an action to be performed by the actor or the agent, certain meanings must already be in place. For the policymaker to justify and argue for the implementation of a certain policy, articulation should take place, which illustrates how it is related to the boarded image or the idea of "we," the nation. Thus, it must be related to and draw from the discursive structure (Wæver, 2002). But at the same time, discourse sets the limits and boundaries of what can be uttered and done. Hence, with the focus on 'how-possible questions', the research framework looks at how this particular subjects' positionings and the relationship between them are discursively constructed and, as a result, are enabling and/or limiting foreign policy agenda. It must be noted here is that the discourse or "the context in which an articulation occurs" and policy articulation are mutually constitutive (Diez, 2014, p. 32). Discourses constitute the foreign policy and the other way around, but they are not in a causal relationship. Hansen (2006, p. 10) argues that they are not in such relationship as "representations of identity are simultaneously the precondition for and (re)produced through articulations of policy." Mutual constitution implies that no social entities can be separated for the purpose of causal analysis (Vucetic, 2011, p. 9). However, the rejection of causation by poststructuralist research design does not mean refusal of acknowledging any causality. This approach puts into question Humeanism and its understanding of the former i.e. 'if A, then B' type relations and regularities (Kurki, 2008, p. 138). Conditions of possibility or how do some policies and practices are made possible through discursive constriction do imply a certain level of causality but not in deterministic, not in Humean sense.

In spite of my study being designed as a single case study of identity construction processes in Georgia, it aims at including a comparative element. To be more exact, with the combination of the research questions, this study leads to looking at the construction of the collective identity as European,

Caucasian, orthodox Christian or any other on the temporal axis (1999 – 2017). Such a comparative design within the single case study unravels national identity as something in constant flux, the constitution of which changes in response to the foreign policy agenda and vice versa. In other words, the findings of this research contribute to the broader field of identity studies in International Relations by offering research of how the collective identity (re)production processes change over time. This research contributes to the study of the effects of the foreign policy tools designed by the major players in international relations (ENP by the European Union, for instance) on the small states at the periphery; caught between the two civilizational poles of attraction. The case study of Georgia is important as it reveals the mismatch between the political elites on both sides in the perceptions of the significance of the Eastern Partnership or what a future with the European Union would look like. To be more precise, the membership prospects for the South Caucasian republic either in NATO or the EU are clearly off the table for the foreseeable future. But at the same time, as I am illustrating in this study, it is the prospect of integration on which the articulation of the liberal national identity discourse is based, and that is invoked as the driving force behind the reforms. This case of a mismatch is what makes Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine i.e. the countries in the Eastern Partnership which decided to proceed with the signature of the Association Agreement with the EU, unique and worth studying. Unlike the case with the Central and Eastern European countries of the former socialist camp, it is still questioned by the West whether these states belong to Europe or not.[3] This is especially the case with Georgia, which shares no land border with any EU member country and has historically been cut off from the rest of European civilization. I conceptualize these discursive processes which refer to history and reproduce the image of Georgia as European as self-colonization.

In addition to the comparative perspective within the single case study of Georgia, the predicted findings of my study are deemed to be important in contributing to further the development of the scholarship on liminality. More specifically I intend to provide the study of one more liminal case and expand the geographical scope of regions analyzed under this concept so far (e.g., Romania, Turkey, Ukraine, Poland, the Baltic states).

Stoicescu in her monumental work titled "Liminality in International Relations: A Comparative Analysis of Discursive Articulations in the Geopolitical Visions of Romania, Turkey, and Ukraine" (2008), suggests:

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[3] For instance, according to Encyclopaedia Britannica there are three ways that the border between Europe and Asia is drawn. The first goes along the Caucasus Mountains leaving Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan in Asia. The second version divides the Caucasus in the middle, putting western part in Europe and eastern parts of Georgia in Asia. The third version, however, goes along the Aras River locating Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in Europe (Bruk et al., n.d.).

in the Romanian and Turkish cases, decision-making elites and intellectuals of statecraft were relatively preoccupied with the issue of the liminal. The literature developed around the issue seemed to be an adapted for framing the findings in these cases, because, as it became apparent, Romanians and Turks have accepted to engage with Europe on its terms, and therefore with the liminal status that developed (ibid, p. 344).

Meanwhile, Ukraine's case illustrated that elites in this country had not engaged with Europe in the same way. As she claims, "this essentially meant that a liminal imagery and corollary subject positions did not exist because the dialogue between the two entities (Europe and Ukraine) was different" (ibid).

The Ukrainian case differed from Romania and Turkey, as it expressed the weakest presence of liminal images. One of the main explanations according to Stoicescu is Russia's role and a large population of the country being Russophile. What is important to note here is that this study was produced in 2008, since which, the geopolitical picture in the region has shifted dramatically. The brief war between Georgia and Russia in August of the same year, the crisis in Ukraine later on, with the annexation of Crimea and escalated tensions with Russia, illustrated the need for research on the new foreign policy challenges affecting the identity discourse and whether it had any effect on the liminal imaginary.

This particular research does not directly deal with the case of Ukraine but instead explores the case of Georgia, which, however, has similar foreign policy challenges. Hence, the theoretical and methodological framework developed within this study, in addition to its original empirical contribution, aims to offer the basis for further research on how to examine and explain developments in the broader region of the Eastern Partnership; what effects Russian and EU policies have on the identity discourses in the post-Soviet states and how these effects translate into later foreign policy agendas of these states. Following the logic of constitutive relationship between foreign policy and national identities, I am examining to what extent foreign policy discourse articulated by the decision makers in the Kremlin and Brussels play a role in the national identity discourses of the liminals in the common neighbourhood. These two civilizational poles that attract competing national identity narratives are conceptualized by Makarychev (2018, p. 205) as incomplete hegemonies, which

> suggests that there are no 'natural' borders delimiting the area of their normative (in the case of the EU) or civilisational (in the case of Russia) extension... ...On the other hand, both hegemonies are incomplete in the sense that neither the EU nor Russia can fully and comprehensively (i.e. institutionally, normatively, economically or security-wise) integrate their neighbours within their normative and civilisational projects.

As examples of the latter point, Makarychev refers to Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, as countries that demand much more from the Brussels than the EU can provide. In a similar manner, the Russian side for instance, fails to meet

Armenian requests to halt the supply of weapons to Azerbaijan. Yerevan has exchanged an AA with the European Union for membership in the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). Yet, according to Makarychev (ibid, p. 227) this decision is being questioned in Armenian political debates due to the role Russia plays in the conflict with Azerbaijan. Officials in the Kremlin do not provide clear support to Yerevan vis-à-vis Baku (not a member of the EEU).

While speaking of the identity/foreign policy relationship, it is important to emphasize that identity within my study is not to be understood as a binary, clear-cut concept, but rather as a continuum with two ideals at each end i.e. European/Western and nationalist/populist, and most of the discourses fall in-between.

←——— Liberal ⟵ Liminality ⟶ Populist ⟶

European/Western   Nationalist/Populist
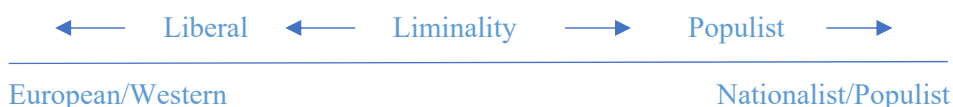
This thesis argues that pro-Western foreign policy and its embeddedness in identity discourse is the key driving force behind social and economic transformation taking place in the country. Even if the tangible results on the integration path seem to be indefinitely postponed, the idea contributes and justifies reforms.

I take a discourse theoretical approach to identity, meaning it is not the starting point of politics, but identity is rather being constantly constructed and transformed through political struggles (Torfing, 1999, p. 82). A parallel can be drawn with poststructuralist research on gender as performative. Judith Butler (1988, p. 520) argues that constituting acts of gender constitutes identity as "a compelling illusion, an object of belief." From this perspective, gender is understood as having no prior ontological status. In a similar manner, Campbell (1992) suggests that the state should be seen as having no ontological status other than the acts which constitute it. Doty (1996b, p. 176) argues that the space which we conceive as a state is a social construction, but one which cannot appear as such, since the "successful practices of statecraft are practices that produce the state's powerful image and simultaneously conceal this production." This is furthermore reinforced by the impossibility of fully fixed meanings, identities, authorities etc. As a result, the state as such is "the never finally completed project of working to fix meaning, authority, and control" (ibid, p. 177). In the words of Auchter (2014, p. 5) the state is always in the process of being constructed even though it "casts itself as existentially for granted." The constant processes of state constructions imply "ordering, bordering, and limitations that construct subjectivity/ies through an iterative and performative process" (ibid). This is precisely how I define national identity constitution within the framework of this study – something having no prior ontological status and in the process of constant reproduction without which it will cease its existence.

Traditional and dominant approaches of international relations, especially realists, have undermined the distinction between the state, nation and sovereignty by conceptualizing the state as a given and unitary actor. Hence, the national identity and its relevance to the issue of sovereignty was dismissed by these approaches as unproblematic (Doty, 1996c, p. 121). Furthermore, this conceptualization assumes that the distinction between inside and outside dichotomy is fixed and has "proceeded to study the world (although not always successfully) as if it were unproblematic" (ibid, p. 123). However, for practitioners of politics that is not the case, as the nation is an intrinsically problematic concept which is never a finished product and open for constant processes of reproduction.

The poststructuralist research design of this study addresses these shortcomings by conceptualizing national identity as a discursive phenomenon and thus instead of assuming an a priori definition it emerges from the specific empirical analysis. Unlike liberal and constructivist studies of International Relations, poststructuralist understanding of identity makes it impossible to conceptualize identity as a variable which "is casually separate from foreign policy or to measure its explanatory value in competition with non-discursive material factors" (Hansen, 2006, p. 1). Unlike more traditional IR theoretical frameworks, critical approaches argue that no state processes a prediscursive, stable identity and that "no state is free from the tension between the various domains that need to be aligned for a political community to come into being" (Campbell, 1992, p. 91). Campbell brings the example of the United States as "an imagined community par excellence" as it only exists "by virtue of people coming to live in a particular place" (ibid). This is precisely the key epistemological advantage of poststructuralism as it allows us to study Georgian foreign policy and civilizational belonging narratives as coming into existence by the virtue of their discursive reproduction.

Although both constructivists and poststructuralists agree on basic ontology, that is, on reality and knowledge both being socially constructed, they disagree on epistemology. In other words, "poststructuralists and constructivists agree that objects of social science are also subjects, yet they disagree on theories of knowing" (Vucetic, 2011b, p. 1304). As a result, while poststructuralists focus on the power/knowledge relationship, constructivists tend to privilege the social construction of reality.

A further advantage of poststructuralism over rationalist and traditional constructivist approaches is its ability to incorporate both material and ideational factors, rather than privileging one over the other (Hansen, 2006, p. 22). Those theoretical approaches that try to explain certain foreign policy outcomes by rational calculations and pursuit of power or from economic calculations, are all committed to epistemic realism i.e. the world is comprised of objects whose existence is independent of ideas and beliefs about them. All the actions and events can be reduced to material causes. In contrast to poststructuralism which suggests that there is nothing outside discourse as "understanding involves rendering the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar" (Campbell, 1992, p. 4).

Applying this framework allows me to study foreign policy discussions in Georgia not as discussions about the policy per se, "but rather how the conventional understanding of foreign policy was made possible via discursive economy that gave value to representational practices associated with a particular problematization" (ibid, p. 37).

Poststructuralist scholarship in IR conceptualizes identity as discursive, political, relational and social. This further differentiates this approach from traditional constructivists "who argue that identity need not be constructed as relational difference" (Hansen, 2006, p. 24). For the latter the states have a pre-social identity with no particular other as well as a difference between the role and type of identities.

The advantage of applying a poststructuralist research design for my study is that it helps to go beyond taking texts about threats coming from Russia or about the "global conspiracy against orthodox Christian civilization" as being presumed to exist materially and independently of national identity discourse. Poststructuralism, and more specifically discourse theory erases the distinction between discursive and non-discursive by suggesting that even technologies, productive organizations or political interventions are relational systems of identities rather than shaped by some objective necessity – hence, they are discursive articulations (Torfing, 1999, p. 90). In another words, the approach I apply in my research shifts the focus to the study of how those out there, whether it is Russia, the European Union or NATO are being constituted by the discourses of liminals about the Self.

Finally, in this thesis I refer to power understood from the Foucauldian perspective as decentralized and pluralized. It is characterized by the ability to shape and mould individuals through institutions. Such an approach is vital for this particular research in two ways: Firstly, it allows a critical examination of how the image of European as "normal" in contrast to Russia is produced. Secondly, it enriches textual empirical data with symbols, institutions and other non-textual data produced outside the official political elite discourse. Although Foucault maintains distinction between discursive and non-discursive and hence is at odds with the discourse theory, his genealogical approach brings these two theories of discourse closer, as Laclau and Mouffe also emphasize the role of power in the discursive production of identities (Torfing, 1999, p. 91). Those features I have outlined, position my study in the broader post-positivist turn in International Relations scholarship.

To summarize, the contribution this particular thesis aims to make is twofold. On the one hand, it sets as its goal to further theorize and develop such concepts as liminality and self-colonization in identity studies. As Neumann (1999) argues, all identities are in constant negotiation and are created through them. They are never fixed but are in ongoing flux. For the study of such societies which are in between, scholars such as Mälksoo (2010, 2012), Neumann (1999), Rumelili (2004, 2012, 2013), and others have proposed an addition to the Self/Other nexus, the concept of liminality. Hence, the dichotomy of the Self/Other gains a new dimension which can be applied to those entities. Addi-

tionally, the theoretical and methodological framework put together within this research falls in line with those scholars who introduced and further advanced poststructuralism in International Relations. This thesis aims to further develop and extend the application of the concept of the liminality in International Relations' research, more specifically by applying it to the case of Georgia and incorporating the post-colonial scholarship within it. This study expands on the argument that the liminal positioning or being in-between leaves the Georgian society in a constant state of transition and will always remain half-complete. Therefore, any foreign policy agenda constituted by identity discourses will be articulated in relation to this positioning.

Secondly, this thesis aims to examine how the idea of Europe is discursively produced and to demonstrate the variance over time of Georgia's Europeanness. I am arguing in this study that the image of the West is reproduced in the political discourse of the liminal states based on concrete goals political elites aim to achieve. To put it in other words, based on the discourse, the idea of Europe can be constructed as a danger to the nation or as strengthening it (Hansen, 2002). I am examining in this research how this discursive (re)production varied over time, that is, how the image of Georgia's Europeanness has grown along with the EU's enlargement to the east; how during the 2008 August war, in discourse theory terms, it managed to achieve hegemonic intervention and cease the social antagonism, and how social antagonism with the alternative discourse on Georgia's identity has come back in the post-war political landscape.

The key argument put forward in this thesis is as follows: *Georgia's liminal positioning vis-à-vis the West (understood as a permanent state/process of becoming European) causes social antagonism as the subject (i.e. the identity of Georgian nation) is articulated by various discourses in mutually exclusive ways.* Liminality or the state of in-betweenness becomes an empty signifier, around which competing discourses start to organize. For instance, for liberal discourse, Russia is perceived to be a constitutive outside i.e. "a radical otherness that, at the same time, constitutes and negates the limits and identity of the discursive formation from which it is excluded (Torfing, 1999, p. 126). The Soviet legacy associated with Russia is constructed as alien to Georgia's identity and imposed by the "Russian imperialism." Meanwhile, the alternative discourse on national identity constructs the West in the same manner. By (re)producing the image of Europe as different, as an entity which would never accept Georgia as an equal, Russia with its Orthodox Christianity and common Soviet past becomes the key element in the chain of equivalence[4] of, what I label in this thesis as the populist/exclusive discourse. These two narratives on national identity I describe as inclusive and exclusive. The liberal conception of the Self or what it means to be Georgian is inclusive, as it is not limited to ethnic or religious elements and is based on citizenship. While the populist understanding of national identity is exclusive, as I demonstrate in empirical

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[4]   Nodal point (a central term that text articulates and gives a particular meaning to) is made equivalent to other signifiers in the chain.

chapter 2, it heavily focuses on the formula Georgian = orthodox Christian and excludes any other ethnic or religious identity of Georgians. It is similar to what is known in the literature as the division between civic and ethno-nationalism. The latter is rooted in "imagined ties of common ethnogenesis, or blood ties." The former on the other hand, "is forged through alliances and experiences related to a national community" (Saunders, 2016, pp. 16–17), which itself is determined by birth in a particular state.

CHAPTER 1. STATE OF THE ART

Due to the escalation of the crisis in Ukraine after Euromaidan in 2014, the relationship between the West and Russia has declined to the lowest point since the Cold War. Some experts go as far as to argue that we are witnessing the emergence of "the Cold War 2.0" (Hove, 2017). The annexation of the Crimean Peninsula by the Russian Federation further shifted the geopolitical picture in the European Union's neighbourhood, which had already been shattered by the brief August War in Georgia in 2008. The consequences of such developments and the effects they have on the region require more diverse and complex theoretical and methodological frameworks to study the states in the area. Association Agreements with the EU signed by Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine brought the engagement of the former in the neighbourhood up to a new level. As consequences of free access to the European common market and synchronization of legislation, new dimensions of discourses on Europe have opened up in the foreign policy debates of the countries concerned.

Regardless of the substantial literature examining these developments and Georgia's foreign policy in the aftermath of the military conflict with its northern neighbour (see Kakachia et al, 2019; Batiashvili, 2018; Kakachia & Minesashvili, 2015; Beacháin & Coene, 2014; Kakachia & Cecire, 2013; Rondeli, 2012), these accounts fail to fully address how the link between foreign policy and identity is produced and maintained in everyday discourses. The latter itself is being defined as the expression of civilizational belonging on a daily basis, either through the display of the flag of the European Union in front of every public institution, the label *first Europeans* used for the archaeological discoveries of early human fossils in Georgia known as homo georgicus, or denying LGBTQI community freedom of expression because *the Caucasus is different*.

Most importantly, the framework I develop within my research helps to examine how the norms and standards imposed by the European Union are internalized or rejected by the political elites. As the membership perspective for countries of Eastern Partnership is not so clear, this adds a unique twist to this study and makes it different from similar research on the CEE states (Kuus, 2004; Rumelili, 2004; Mälksoo, 2010). It explores how pro-European foreign policy trajectories are embedded in Georgian national identity narratives despite the differences between the political elites in Brussels and Georgia on what to expect from the deepened cooperation in the first place. To be more precise, what the EU promotes in its neighbourhood is 'institutional identity' which stands in contrast to the 'symbolic' one, produced within the European Union itself. While for the latter such symbols as a common currency, the anthem or history are important, reproduction of institutional identity relies on specific institutions and the idea of their superiority (Karolewski, 2012). Karolewski suggests that the cases of the Central and Eastern European states offer a theoretical middle ground between constructivist and realist approaches. Brussels's approach towards these countries was not only guided by conditionality but was

embedded in the collective identity transfer. Conditionality strategies towards the CEE were accompanied by the strong normative argument of "returning to Europe", while the current ENP lacks the same status (ibid, p. 26). Although conditionality and socialization in the post-Soviet space is weaker as the EU uses the discourse of 'identity light, "by promoting notions, such as the circle of friends, rather than formulating a definitive membership perspective" (ibid, p. 19), this does not stop political elites in Georgia from interpreting these policy tools differently. Additionally, despite the government's consistent commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration, as polls from Caucasus Barometer illustrate, support for these institutions is in decline. Figure 1 shows that the support for EU membership has declined from 69% to 45% by 2017, while the percentage of respondents not approving increased almost threefold, from 5 to 13 percent.

EUSUPP: Support of Georgia's membership in EU (%)

Caucasus Barometer time-series dataset Georgia
Retrieved from http://caucasusbarometer.org/
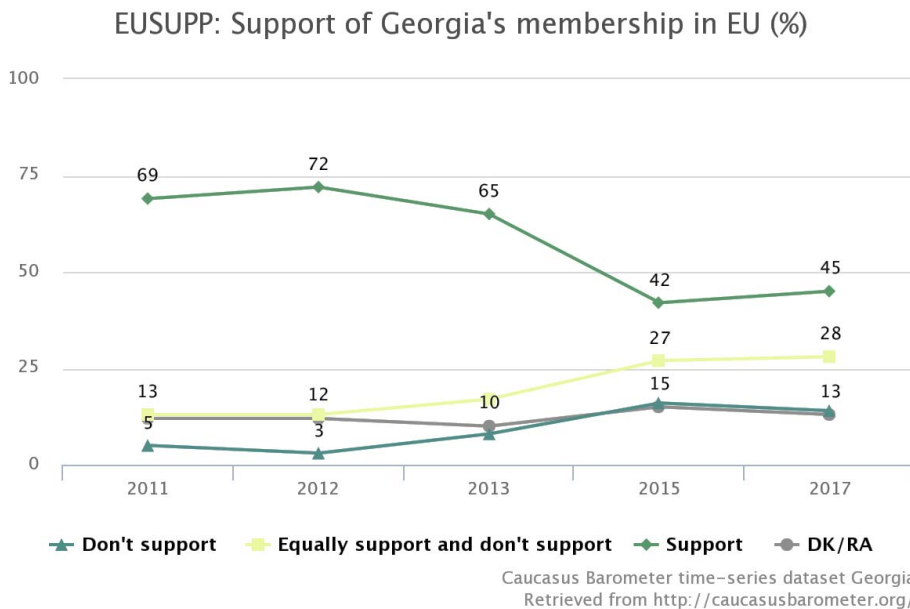
Figure 1.

According to the second graph (figure 2), trust in the European Union among the Georgian population has declined from 54% in 2008 to 33% by 2017, while distrust has increased from 10% to 18%. This trend does not concern only the European Union, as attitudes towards NATO are following a similar pattern. According to figure 3 support for the membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has gone down. The reason for such decline has to be sought in the ambiguity over the nature of relationship ENP implies and the launch of the Eastern Partnership was not able to address (Nielsen & Vilson, 2014, p. 244). As the result of delayed and indefinitely postponed tangible results, spaces

appear where the official discourse or in Foucauldian terms, "regime of truth" could be challenged and disrupted. Poststructuralism, in contrast to other more traditional approaches of IR theories, offers the most adequate lens to address these alternative developments that can affect the course of events (Morrow, 2017).

TRUSTEU: Trust towards EU (%)

Caucasus Barometer time-series dataset Georgia
Retrieved from http://caucasusbarometer.org/

Figure 2.

NATOSUPP: Support of Georgia's membership in NATO (%)

Caucasus Barometer time-series dataset Georgia
Retrieved from http://caucasusbarometer.org/
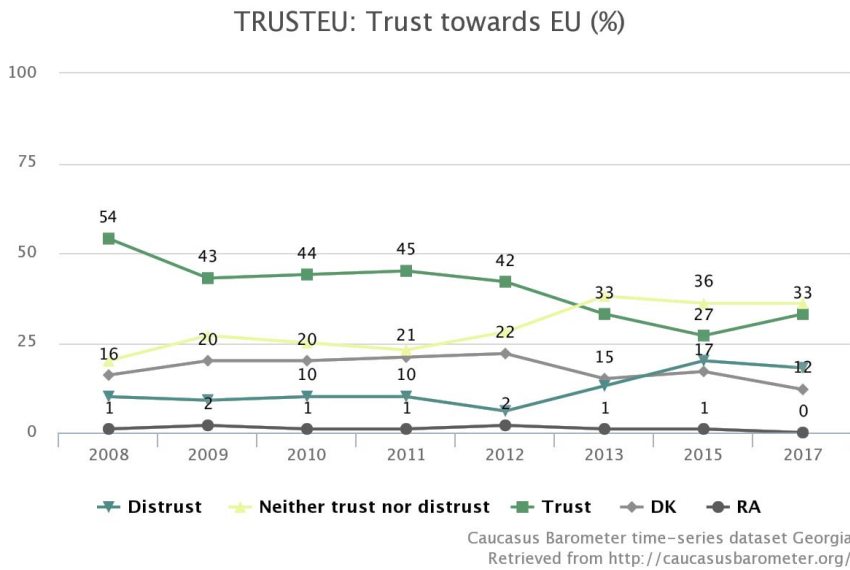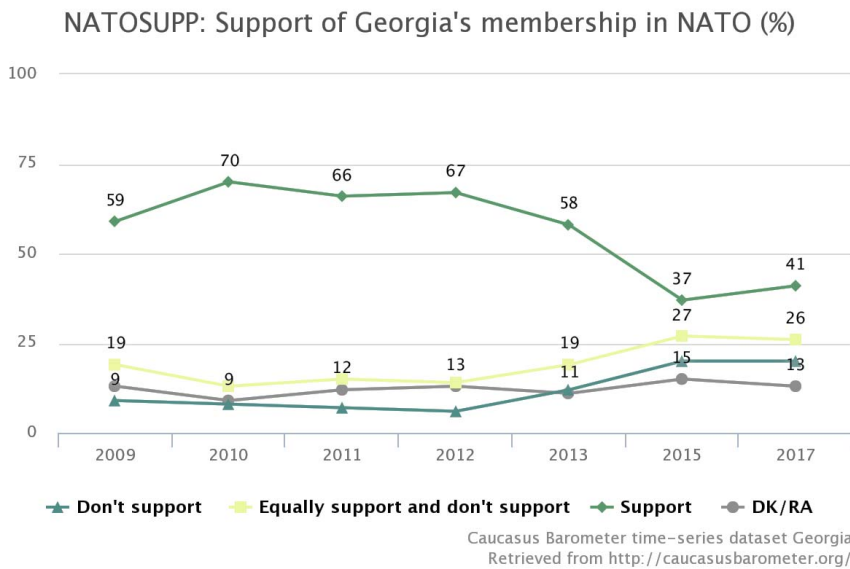
Figure 3.

As the numbers above illustrate, despite the consistency of the political elite's commitment to pro-Western foreign policy, the population's attitude varies according to the circumstances and context. This can be partially explained due to the ambiguous and vague European future of Eastern Partnership countries. France made it clear that EaP excludes all the prospects of membership and EU integration. Instead, it is focused on rule of law, the fight against corruption and modernization (Jozwiak, 2020).

Scholars working on the EU's neighbourhood policy argue that the ENP, which was launched in 2004 and aimed at creating the "ring of friends" instead of the "ring of fire" around the European Union, failed to achieve its goals. Unlike the successful transition of Eastern and Central European states, democratization in these countries was largely unsuccessful (Nilsson and Silander, 2016). This is further amplified by the fact that regional projects be they either the EU's or Russia's do not take place in a vacuum. They are embedded in the preferences and perceptions of local actors, as well as on the calculations of costs and benefits by the elites (Delcour, 2015).

Karolewski's (2012) thesis on the EU's two identities meant for the member and non-member states, this also implies the element of promoting the conceptions of normal as well as conceptions of superior. While the first one promotes the implementation of the EU's own institutional rules, norms, standards in the neighbouring countries, the second refers to Brussels' image of normative superiority.

> As a consequence, European institutions, procedures, norms, and values become new rules of conduct for non-member states: their internal institutions, as well as policies, are judged by the EU's norms. Thus, by adopting these norms, third countries also assume the institutional identity of the EU (ibid, p. 14).

Karolewski identifies two mechanisms at work through which an institutional identity of non-EU member states is created. The first one refers to the socialization of the actors when the political elite use norms genuinely, meaning they are committed to those values and believe in them. The second mechanism, on the other hand, is instrumental i.e. when the actors act according to the EU norms as long as such actions serve their interest. As a result, one can observe three major causal workings of norms vis-à-vis identities: first, the application of incentives and rewards by the identity-giving actors; second, the internalization of norms and identities by the adapting actors, and lastly, "unselfish exchange of arguments with the goal of finding a consensus rather than negotiations based on individual interests" (ibid, p. 17). Whereas the first two imply a one-directional framework, the last represents a two-way relationship. Hence, Karolewski concludes that it is possible to identify a theoretical middle ground between constructivism and realism while studying the EU's identity transfer in the neighbourhood. The latter puts emphasis on conditionality as the key instrument and more effective mechanism of identity transfer in contrast to constructivists' reliance on the legitimacy of norms. Instead, one could argue that the

European Union can change its mode of operation regarding the methods of identity transfer, that is, to use either normative or rationalist logic based on the country or the policy field. While applying this framework to the post-Soviet space, Karolewski (ibid, p. 19) comes up with the term 'identity light' meaning that it involves fewer pledges of solidarity, less loyalty and commitment-orientation, and fewer arguments related to common history and European togetherness.

Regarding how successful such strategies of identity transfer could be, he argues that it depends on the density of institutional ties and contacts between the EU and the third countries, as well as on how legitimate the norms coming from Brussels are perceived to be by the identity receivers. Drawing a parallel between the CEECs and current EaP member states, 2004's enlargement, according to Karolewski, was accompanied by the strong normative arguments of reuniting Europe, returning to Europe, etc. which is missing in Brussels' discourse on the Eastern Partnership. Grajewski (2012, p. 151) compares this relationship of sharing "everything but institutions" to Robinson Crusoe and Friday, as the members of the EaP

> are expected to rejoice about being given the privilege of following the suggestions of their enlightened Lord and Master and delighted with the possibility of implementing the laws created without their participation by the 'centre of modern civilization', the source of which is, of course, Brussels.

In this context neighborhood policies can be seen as a "bureaucratic answer" to the political question of where the eastern border of the European Union is drawn. In contrast to the enlargement, with the aim of creating "ideal members," the European Neighborhood Policy and similar tools aim to create the "ideal neighbor" which is both in and out at the same time (Wolzuc, 2018, p. 280).

Raik argued already in 2006 that while studying the Eastern Neighborhood Policy one needs to take into consideration the interconnection between the EU both as a security and as a value community. According to this argument the Eastern Neighborhood Policy does not provide sufficient motivation for neighbors to pursue the fundamental values, such as human rights, the rule of law, etc. on which the EU is founded. "The ENP does not, therefore, function as an instrument for actively promoting the EU's values in countries that are not already committed to these values" (Raik, 2006, p. 90).

In order to shed some light on what Raik (ibid, p. 90) called a paradox inherent in the EU's policies towards neighbors (namely, "the mechanism of extended governance works most effectively for those countries that need it least") I propose to examine the Eastern Partnership project from a poststructuralist and self-colonization perspective. In other words, as there is no clear membership perspective coming from the outside i.e. from Brussels, EaP countries create this image from within, through embedding foreign policy agenda and domestic transformations into the identity discourse.

One important detail which should be mentioned here is that despite the ENP and EaP being two different policy tools, they are not drastically different from each other in terms of membership perspective. Although the latter was launched on the basis of the former, as it was meant to separate policies towards the Southern neighbors from the ones aimed at the countries on the Eastern frontier, most scholars agree that the two are not substantially different. One of the key areas where the confusion remains is the ambiguity regarding the notion of 'partnership'; its difference from the original ENP; and lack of detail (Korosteleva, 2011). As will be later elaborated in this study, the anthropological concept of liminality fits perfectly to analyze the positioning of the EaP countries vis-à-vis the European Union, as they are at the same time in and out, included more than the countries of North Africa but still not enough so.

This thesis also aims to dig deeper into what Delcour (2015) calls the deeply divided common neighbourhood between those countries that signed the Association Agreement and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) with the European Union and those which decided to join the Eurasian Economic Union. She argues that the foreign policy directions of the countries in the region should not be viewed as "just the outcome of external actors' stimuli and pressures" but also as the results of individual countries' socio-economic needs, structural constraints, elite preferences, etc. The last point is especially important since the elite's interpretation of pressures and stimuli affects the foreign policy agenda.

In addition, I aim to illustrate with the findings of this research how the dominant discourse coming from the political establishment constructs Georgia as Eastern Europe. Some scholars argue that there is a fundamental difference between the Baltics and the South Caucasus.

> Whereas Baltic nations conceive their past as backward and uncivilized through the images and memory of violence and Stalinist despotism, in the South Caucasus the dominant local discourse is based on the return of Orientalism following the collapse of the Soviet empire. The Soviet past is seen, in contrast to the Baltic States, as a period of modernization, Europeanization, and the suppression of traditionalism (Darieva & Kaschuba, 2007, p. 20).

My argument in this thesis is that the dominant discourse does exactly the opposite, especially in the context of the AA and DCFTA. As will be illustrated with rich data in the empirical chapters, the political elite in Georgia follows similar articulations to those of the Baltics in the early 2000s, while it is the challenging and marginal narrative that constructs the Soviet past as the "period of modernization" and in opposition to the West.

Examining this tendency of dominant discourse on foreign policy, Kakachia et al (2019) in their paper 'Defying marginality: explaining Ukraine's and Georgia's drive towards Europe', attempted to explain Georgia and Ukraine's drive towards the core by both consequentialist i.e. security concerns and ideational (Europe as civilizational choice) perspectives. The paper defines

these two countries as "each on Europe's periphery, attempting to define their relationship to Europe and trying to break away from the Soviet legacy and escape post-Soviet geopolitical space" (p. 1). This process of the "return to Europe", supported by the population and political class, is arguably driven by two incentives: the EU and NATO as the only long-term solution for security risks coming from Russia, and Europe as the "historic homeland."

Although I mostly agree with the arguments put forward in this research, as they are illustrative of the case of both Georgia and Ukraine, my thesis takes a different angle. As my goal is to answer 'how-possible questions' instead of 'why-questions', I examine how this transition from the periphery to the core is constituted; how these processes are constructed in relation to national identity discourses, and how the continuities and historic links with the West are (re)produced in order to make certain policy moves possible.

CHAPTER 2. SELF-COLONIZATION:
THE BREAK OF LIMINALS FROM THE FREEZE-FRAME

As Shapiro (1988) remarked, foreign policy is about making the others (in Neumann, 1999, p. 23). In order to examine how Georgian foreign policy is reproduced, we need to explore processes of making the others, articulations of exclusions and inclusions. By othering Russia, or creating "the East" at its border, Georgian policymakers reproduce the image of Europeanness. Due to the insecurity of the liminal state about its positioning on the East/West nexus, it becomes easier for the political interest groups to translate foreign policy discourses into the broader civilizational debates and legitimize or undermine the official agenda. Hence, while looking at these processes unravelling in Georgia, the following research follows the line of arguments developed by Iver B. Neumann in his famous work from 1999 "Uses of the Other: "The East" in European Identity Formation" arguing that Europe creates the East while the latter creates its own Orient to emphasize its Europeanness. "Inasmuch as European identity is tied to the existence of an Other, this other will be constitutive of Europe, and so European representations of that other will necessarily be marked by that very fact" (Neumann, 1999, p. 41).

What should be noted here is that identity "is a fluid, many-stranded and perpetually negotiated phenomenon, and so all identities are ipso facto ambiguous" (ibid, p. 110). Neumann's work is looking at the idea of Russia as Europe's other along the temporal dimension, as a country in "some stage of transition to Europeanization" (ibid, p. 111). This thesis aims to contribute to the literature by introducing a postcolonial perspective in the study of the states which recently came into the picture of the European neighbourhood. The deeper engagement of Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine with the European Union introduced the need for further othering of Russia, in order to reaffirm one's own belonging to the West. This articulation of Europeanness by the elites is what I will refer to in this thesis as self-colonization, and which, unlike the classical understanding of the colonialism is addressing the societies which have not been affected by colonial rule from Western powers (Kiossev, 1995). The relationships between the elites of Eastern Partnership frontrunner countries and Brussels are postcolonial as such relations cannot be defined with any pre-given criteria. Postcolonial is rather situational and relational (Morozov, 2015, p. 9). Such self-colonizing collective entities usually go back to their historical roots to look for the justification and the proof of their belonging to the West. However, their current Self is being constructed from both sides as inferior to Europe. They simultaneously are being excluded from and belong to the West.

This research is examining symbols (flags, anthems, monuments, etc.), historical facts and the meanings attached to them through discourses on Georgia's European identity as instances of Georgians looking for justifications and proof of their belonging. Saunders (2016, p. 17) argues that there are a variety of

means through which national identity is reproduced. These means could entail visual/performative aspects, such as music, theatre or athletic competition, oral, written or historic narratives, sense of belonging and memory, or through associations. One could draw a parallel to Hobsbawm's (1983) concept of the invention of traditions and the idea of the need to invent one in order to create the image of historic continuity. History becomes a vital domain in which meanings "are 'embodied' and in which things become meaningful is certain beyond the shadow of a doubt" (Castoriadis, 1975, 2005, pp. 22–23). In addition, Castoriadis argues that no particular historical fact has a meaning isolated from the society in which it is produced. Hence, the study of the references to the historical facts in the contemporary discourses become vital for identity studies, especially from the self-colonization perspective. In Foucauldian terms, one cannot look at history other than from the contemporary gaze. History is interpreted and reproduced according to the discourses which set limits on what can be said and what should not be altered. This will be elaborated in-depth in the discourse theory part, but before that I need to expand on some key theoretical concepts in detail.

In the introduction I briefly mentioned the works of Hopf and Hintz, where each studied how different conceptions of the Self dictate specific policy moves. Hintz (2016, p. 361) in her study develops the classification of Turkish national identity contestations: Western Liberalism, Republican Nationalism and Ottoman Islamism. Each of the narratives has its own constitutive norms of membership and behavior (CN), Social Purpose (SP), Relational Meaning (RM) and Cognitive Worldview (CW). The first component refers to the rules and norms which define who the members are, and the appropriate behavior for them. The second component defines what constitutes the goals and aims of the group, the third defines how the group positions itself vis-à-vis other groups, while the fourth "provides an overarching sense of the group's role in the world." (ibid, p. 341). An important detail which Hintz notes is that none of these elements are fixed. They go through change as the result of contestations that can take place both within the group and between the groups. These struggles, according to Hintz, carry immense ontological significance, which is due to the subjects of competitions. As the struggles are over the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, friends and enemies, it is essentially about "who "we" are and how we should behave" (ibid, p. 340). Furthermore, the supporters of a particular identity proposal tend to seek opportunities to spread its acceptance to more individuals. This leads her to conceptualize these attempts of spreading the support for a particular proposal as striving for hegemony, which itself is defined as the power wielded and legitimacy enjoyed by the identity proposal due to its widespread popularity. But what is important, is that hegemony, as it is met with active and sustained resistance, is almost impossible to be attained.

Following the example of Hintz's research framework, I also propose to break down two conceptions of Georgian national identity, liberal and populist (inclusive and exclusive) into these four components. This helps to better grasp the processes at play as well as provides an analytically useful tool to consider

the complexities of a vast amount of empirical data. Furthermore, the findings of the poststructuralist discourse analysis conducted within the scope of this research can be conceptualized as such striving for hegemony by the competing identity proposals/narratives.

	Liberal/Inclusive	Populist/Exclusive
Norms of Membership	Non-ethnic, civic member-ship. Embraces (at least on the discursive level) individual liberties, open trade, liberal immigration policies, etc.	Ethnic, religious-based membership. Hostile towards immigrants. Embraces conservative and "traditional" values.
Social Purpose	Implementation of the European norms and standards	Promote spread of conservative, anti-western and anti-globalization sentiments.
Relational Meaning	Constructs Europe as the natural "home" where Georgia belongs, while alienating Russia and the Soviet past.	Constructs modern western civilization as perverted and degraded. Orthodox Christian Russia as a natural ally. Idealizes the Soviet past.
Cognitive Worldview	Sees itself as a natural part of modern, Western civilization	Sees itself as a part of Russia-led orthodox Christian world

Figure 4. Georgian National Identity Contestations

Considering the ongoing fierce academic debates around the concept of populism, I need to clarify that within the context of this research what makes a discourse populist is "the people" as a nodal point in reference to which a collective identity is constructed. In contrast to the liberal narrative, "the people" does not represent the whole community of the citizens, but rather is constructed with chains of equivalence and difference, which limits it to a specific religious, linguistic and ethnic aspect. Furthermore, populist articulation creates the dichotomy between "the real community" and the establishment/elites. The latter is blamed for depriving "the people" of their sovereign rights, self-rule, values, etc. (Wojczewski, 2019, p. 254). These aspects give populist articulations illiberal elements. "Populists tend to assume the ordinary people are a monolithic group, and that those governing should protect them against perceived threats from "different" peoples such as elites, immigrants or some other minority with possible links to foreign countries and cultures" (Patman, 2019, p. 282). Thus, populist discourse is skeptical of multiculturalism, free movement of people or capital and is more conservative and traditionalist. Hence, any discourse can be called populist on both the extreme political left and right, as long as the core of people vs. the elites is there. In Laclau's (2005, p. 74) terms there should be at least the two preconditions for a populist discourse: the

formation of an internal Other that stands in opposition to "the people" and articulation that makes "the people" possible. Following this conceptualization, challenging Georgian discourse on national identity is qualified as populist not because of the certain ideological views, but whether it at least meets these two conditions or not. I am following Mudde's (2017, p. 48) ideational approach to populism which defines it as an ideology that divides people into two groups: 'the pure people' vs. 'the corrupted elite'. Thus, it implies four key concepts: the people, the elite, ideology, and general will of the people.

Liberal or inclusive discourse on national identity with the emphasis on Europe as the historic home of Georgia represents a hegemonic articulation. I elaborate on this in further detail in my discourse theory subchapter, but there are still several points to be made already here. Firstly, the discourse becomes hegemonic when its representation of reality is reflected in the articulations of a broad majority of interacting subjects. "It starts to be hegemonic when our everyday understanding of social relations and the world as a whole start to alter according to the framework that is set by the hegemonic discourse" (Nabers & Stengel, 2019, p. 107).

Prevalence of a particular social force is what Nabers and Stengel (ibid) call sedimented practices. With the latter, the discourse generates specific practices and institutions and becomes "objective" by becoming institutionally fixed. In other words, "they legitimize a certain strand of action, while delegitimizing others" (ibid). However, as social institutionalization will always be incomplete, sedimented practices never achieve full fixation.

Sedimented practices are characterized by three core elements: being associated with myths, being constitutive of historical change and entailing an ethical dimension.

> Myths provide powerful articulations of identity and difference. Importantly, myths essentially point to an absence, a fullness of society that can never be fully reached. Social transformation emerges as a result of struggles to fill that empty presence (ibid, p. 109).

To put it differently, myth represents "the missing fullness of a nation" which has to remain empty. Otherwise, any attempt to actually fill a myth with meaning i.e. deciding what it is and what it is not "would mean to subject the myth to everyday political struggles, thus ending its mythical status" (ibid). Myth is the metaphor for absent fullness, fullness which cannot be achieved (Torfing, 1999, p. 115).

This is precisely how we should view 'the West' in contemporary Georgian context. It is a myth that points to the historic home that has been lost. At the same time, it remains empty with no clear definition of what this 'West' means. As a result, all the political actors who support Georgia's pro Euro-Atlantic foreign policy are labelled as 'pro-Western' despite some fundamental differences

amongst themselves or from their western counterparts.[5] This is where identity comes in, as it can only be established by constructing the distinction between "the mythical Inside and negative Outside." It unites all the 'pro-Western' actors vis-à-vis the rest (threatening outsiders). The concept of chains of equivalence from discourse theory helps to explain this phenomenon. It suppresses internal differences between those political parties and constructs them as a monolith in opposition to "pro-Russians."

2.1 Liminality

One of the key contributions of the following research is to develop and further expand the theoretical scholarship which applies the cultural-anthropological concept of liminality to identity studies in International Relations. The starting point of my research is the contested national identity of the societies on the European Union's Eastern border and how it is constituted through discourses. What are the effects of policy tools designed in Brussels on the countries in the immediate neighbourhood of the EU and how do they contribute to competing articulations of national Self? In this regard, Stoicescu observes that the countries in the East during the enlargement process of the European Union are never told "no" but rather "not yet" or "yes, but", highlighting characteristics of being in and out at the same time and not the total absence of Europeaness (2008, p. 38). Kuus (2004) argues that the EU's enlargement policy and relations towards the candidate states become the disciplinary/policing tool. In addition, in line with Neumann, she suggests that the Central and Eastern European countries are constantly othering Russia as the East and Oriental in order to reinforce their Self or their belonging to Europe.

I illustrate in this study how a similar tendency has shifted more to the East since the so-called "Big Bang" of 2004 when ten new members joined the EU. However, unlike the former, due to the so-called 'identity light,' it is a different and unique case in its own right. If in the case of the CEE countries the approach taken by Brussels has been guided not only by conditionality, but also by being embedded in a collective identity transfer – "returning to Europe," the Eastern Partnership lacks the same status. 'Identity light' promotes notions such as "circle of friends" and instead of offering the frontrunners of EaP (Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia) a path towards membership, simply helps them to reform their domestic legislation in line with the EU's body of law.

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[5] For instance, the libertarian political party Girchi believes in limiting the state's regulatory power as much as possible, proposing such radical measures as elimination of mandatory schooling, state universities, ministry of education or food safety inspections. Such radical policies contradict the Association Agreement concluded and so greatly celebrated by the Georgian government, let alone meeting any European Union membership criteria. Yet, Girchi is always listed as a pro-Western party and other political parties would consider Girchi as a potential coalition partner, precisely because of 'the West' as the myth with no actual meaning.

There are two key factors which make the cases of CEE, and the Eastern Partnership and the level of the EU's engagement different and hence enable me to take this thesis further than just a regional amplification/replication of the previous research on Central and Eastern European states. Firstly, the overall geopolitical picture has dramatically shifted since the annexation of Crimea and Russian invasion of Eastern Ukraine. These developments affected the perception of the European Union and NATO as the security actor in the region and the role of pro-Western foreign policy agenda in discourses of the countries concerned. Secondly, what makes states of the Eastern Partnership different from the processes that took place prior to the 2004 enlargement is that the membership prospects for Georgia or Ukraine are not so obvious. Despite the hopes and expectations, what is implied by the term *partnership* with eastern neighbors still remains vague and constitutes a threat to the effectiveness of EaP (Gretskiy et al., 2014; Korosteleva, 2014). As Park (2014, p. 6) argued, due to the vagueness of the benefits, citizens of partner countries did not push their governments for more vigorous Eastern Partnership reforms. In January 2019, France made it clear that the Eastern Partnership was not a path to membership for eastern neighbors and instead, it was about modernization, democratization and the fight against corruption (Jozwiak, 2019). Although the Association Agreement recognizes Georgia as an Eastern European country, it does not guarantee that it will be offered any membership perspective in near future (Paul, 2015, p. 5). These circumstances justify the relevance and importance of this thesis, as there is a clear discrepancy between the Euro-Atlantic institutions and political elite of Eastern Partnership states about the destination point for this long journey of engagement with each other. The adopted theoretical framework combining liminality with self-colonization and discourse theory provides a lens which enables light to be shed on the role of the West in Georgia's identity discourses, particularly on how being European (but not fully so) is reproduced on a daily basis.

As a result of some specific geographical and historical circumstances, the Eastern border of Europe is not clearly demarked, it is in a constant process of (re)making. Wolff (1994, p. 7) argues that scientific cartography seemed to contradict the philosophic construction of Eastern Europe from an Orientalist perspective, excluding it from Europe and shifting it into Asia. This means that already in the era of Enlightenment, a developmental division of the continent between the Western and Eastern Europe was established, and the border drawn by mental maps of the westerners was different from the border of Europe in scientific cartography.

> Such uncertainty encouraged the construction of Eastern Europe as a paradox of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion, Europe but not Europe. Eastern Europe defined Western Europe by contrast, as the Orient defined the Occident, but was also made to mediate between Europe and the Orient. One might describe the invention of Eastern Europe as an intellectual project of demi-Orientalization (ibid).

Following this perspective, the classical dichotomy of the Self/Other dynamic underpinning any identity fails to substantially address foreign policy discourses of Eastern Partnership countries. Hence, liminality as a concept offers a better starting point for studying the constitution of identities which are in the stage of transition, at the crossroads of two civilizations, and are "neither here nor there." Liminality, while anthropologically is defined as a transitory phase, and in the case of Georgian discourse on national identity is grounded in a constant feeling of inferiority and involves internalizing second-class status vis-à-vis the core, which is the West. This is a major feature of societies that are located at the peripheries of Europe and are subject to inclusion and exclusion at the same time. They feel that they are not completely alien, external, or foreign to Europe, but at the same time, they are not perceived to be fully European either.

The concept of liminality originates in anthropology. Arnold Van Gennep (1908; 1960) while observing the ceremonies of various tribes, concluded that in the rites connected with pregnancy, betrothal or initiations, the concept of transition plays a key role. He divided a complete scheme of rites of passage into three stages: pre-liminal, liminal and the post-liminal, or in other words, rites of separation, rites of transition and the rites of incorporation. This classification was further developed by Victor Turner, who argues that "if our basic model of society is that of a 'structure of positions,' we must regard the period of margin or 'liminality' as an interstructural situation" (Turner, 1967, p. 93).

He characterizes the transitional period as a process of becoming, the starting point of which is the detachment from "an earlier fixed point in the social structure or a set of cultural conditions (a 'state')" (ibid, p. 94). This is usually followed by the liminal state of the subject, the stage of becoming, which is characterized by ambiguity as "he passes through a realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state" (Turner, 1967, p. 94). As the passage is completed, the subject returns to a stable state and through the new structural arrangements acquires new rights and obligations, as well as is expected to behave within the certain customary norms and standards. Liminality, according to Turner, is characterized by an absence of any property, status, secular clothing, kinship, etc. but at the same time, it has positive aspects. It is an important process of passage, which leads to the transformation and rebirth of the subject undergoing it. Turner also argued that liminality as such, in this condition of being "neither here nor there" is a state in itself. Liminal entities are in the condition of being "neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial" (Turner, 1969, p. 95). Thus, liminality is often linked to death, to darkness, to being in the womb, bisexuality etc.

There is one important aspect when applying the concept to the whole society. While in anthropological usage what constitutes liminality is clearly defined, what is the way into and out of it, as well as that there are experienced "masters of ceremonies" to guide the subjects through the rituals, however in the case of the whole societies this is hardly so. According to Thomassen

(2015), there are two key differences: firstly, the future is unknown and secondly, there are no so-called masters of the ceremony, as there is nobody who has gone through it before. As I am demonstrating in this research, Georgia's liminal identity or seemingly never-ending stage of transition becomes part of its national identity. The internalization of the concepts of being in transition; being located at the crossroads between Asia and Europe where two civilizations blend as well as the idea of a bridge between two cultures, become points of the articulation of Georgia's national identity and of being transmitted to the foreign policy agenda. Szakolczai (2015) compares such a condition to a film stopped at a particular frame. To something, which is frozen in-between the separation and reaggregation and speculated that there are three types of permanent liminality: monasticism, court society, and Bolshevism.

The inclusion of the concept of liminality in political science or International Relations is especially important as it offers a new dimension to identity studies as this theoretical framework is able to overcome binary oppositions and further extend the understanding of political subjects as Self-Liminal-Other. This feature of liminality helps to better study the process of the formation of identities which are in constant flux, in the state of becoming, especially when the discourse of 'becoming European' is analyzed or how countries which are going through transition fall short of completing the process and retain second-class status states in comparison to their Western European counterparts. "Thus, what constitutes liminality is not the (possibility of) transition, but rather the fact that this transition is priorly constituted to always remain half-complete" (Rumelili, 2012, p. 503). However, according to Rumelili's understanding, Turkey's liminal identity is the product of specific discourses on international politics rather than an inherent trait (Rumelili & Suleymanoglu-Kurum, 2017). As is illustrated below, this is exactly the case one can observe in the foreign policy discourse vis-à-vis the EU of members of the Eastern Partnership.

Liminality as a research toolkit has the "capacity to provide explanatory and interpretative accounts of seemingly unstructured situations" and hence links "experience-based and cultural-oriented approaches to contemporary political problems" (Horvath et al, 2015, p. 3) as well as offer comparisons across historical periods.

Anne Norton, one of the first scholars to apply liminality to political science, was referring to the concept as a source of collective identity, writing:

> Liminars, whether their rites of passage are ritual or revolutionary, are between identities. In politics, they are between allegiances. This state is marked by ambiguity, ambivalence, and contradiction, yet it is from this disorder that new orders arise. In reflecting on the differences that mark out the liminal, people give meaning to their nationalities (Norton, 1988, p. 51).

In other words, an important feature of liminality is its ability to form a new structure and a new set of rules for the subjects. Liminality can be regarded as the platform for new political beginnings, which, once achieved, return back to the status or the level of being taken for granted. Norton claimed that liminality not only provides the definition of the nation but at the same time implies the recognition of the source of the definition (Norton, 1988). Translating this into the context of the following research, as one of the Georgian politicians remarked "while Asia sees Georgia as Europe, Europe sees Georgia as Asia" (Kiknadze, 2015, p. 83). This ambiguity becomes the main source of one's liminal identity and as is discussed later on, self-colonization as a concept helps to explain strategies such societies tend to employ.

Referring to the stage metaphor, Szakolzai (2015, p. 28) argues that liminality is helpful to understand the importance of formative aspects of transitory periods. Here the concept of the transformative event is introduced, which is a technical term in sociological analysis, the degree and the direction of which depend on

> the surviving fragments of previous identities, the existence of external reference points that remain more or less intact, and the presence or absence of new models, forms, or measures (ibid, p. 30).

In the case of the Eastern Partnership countries, such an event is the collapse of the Soviet Union, which altered what seemed to be already fixed, i.e. the identity of being Soviet. In discourse theory terms, this was a dislocation, as a result of which, established meanings were lost while new ones were still in the stage of formation. Szakolzai suggests that the scholarly concept of liminality leads to understating such major events as the transformers of "the very mode of being of the individuals involved" (ibid). The extent of the event forces individuals to look for models to follow or "imitate." During the liminal or the transitory period, they could easily be misled or have their identity altered. Thus, looking at competing and sometimes even mutually exclusive national identity discourses (Western vs. post-Soviet) from the perspective of liminality helps to better understand the seemingly irrational foreign policy narrative. On the other hand, what should be kept in mind is that liminality is a concept, which points towards a certain kind of interpretative analysis, but it does not explain it in positivist sense (Thomassen, 2015, p. 40). It refers to something very simple "the experience of finding oneself at a boundary or in an in-between position," (ibid) both spatially and temporally. Hence, Thomassen argues for the necessity of the scale or the degree to which liminality is experienced. It becomes especially intense when personal and "civilizational" liminality converges. As I aim to establish with this study, this is precisely the case for post-Soviet Georgia, where personal experiences on a daily basis converge with a larger civilizational discourse shaping foreign policy discourses.

The concept of liminality in Political Science and International Relations has been further developed by Rumelili, Mälksoo, Stoicescu, and other scholars. Application of this theoretical framework for identity studies in these fields allows us to go beyond the Self/Other dichotomy and add another dimension, where the identities of in-between societies fall. The Self-Liminal-Other nexus comes into play, which helps to analyze the processes of becoming European or the making of one's European identity in the constant Othering and reproduction of "the East." It also seems to represent the strength of the liminality as a concept, since it, unlike most of the positivist theories, instead of seeing reality as largely given, puts an emphasis on the power of agency to reconstruct existing realities and create new ones (Mälksoo, 2012, pp. 488–489). In addition, as Rumelili illustrated in her case study of Turkey, one of the important features of the liminal identity is that countries going through the stage of transition always fall short of completing the transformation, so will always remain 'remain 'second class states' in comparison to their Western European counterparts. As she argues, one can observe the contradiction between the universal and exclusive. If human rights and democratization can be considered to be universal, something any state can achieve through reforms, Europeanisation is something exclusive, which stems from geographical location. Applying this concept to the study of democratization offers a new perspective to look at these processes. Instead of making either/or distinctions, it differentiates between the Self and Other on a temporal basis. However, in order to validate and reproduce itself, such processes need to be recognized by those who are not democratic yet but are aspiring towards it. Or in other words, placing themselves in the liminal position. As Lene Hansen (2006, p. 40) put it: "Discourses of returning to 'Europe' or 'the West' illustrate that the Self can be constructed through an identity that is articulated as both superior to the Self and as identical to it."

Democracy promotion thus becomes linked to identity reproduction, as it acquires hierarchical features by individual polities representing themselves as more democratic than their significant others (Rumelili, 2013, pp. 69–70). Meanwhile, the Europeanisation or Westernization is applicable only to those societies, which share cultural and historical narratives with Europe. As a result of the contradictions between the universalistic and particularistic discourses, discourse on democracy acquires hierarchical features where the West has superiority in criticizing the non-West. Or in other words, it leaves the non-West in ae constant state of transition to become the West. In such contradictions between the two, spaces constructed through discourses appear and represent a possibility of existing beyond a Self/Other dichotomy. These spaces are the ones, which can be characterized as liminals and where countries like Turkey, Ukraine or Georgia can be placed.

Some liminal actors might reproduce and try to maintain existing social categories in response to their liminal positioning, while others might challenge the current social order through the employment of their liminality. These kinds of practices are usually the consequences of domestic discourses on their

liminality (Rumelili, 2012). Or as Stoicescu (2008, p. 16) puts it: "The development of the liminal imaginary in geopolitical and foreign policy discourse can be seen both as a means of resistance to the fact of being defined by Europe, as in Turkey, and as a means of accepting definition coming from Europe, as in Romania." In Georgia's case, it can be argued that while liberals try to reproduce the existing social order by advocating further reforms and modernization with moves to become more Western or 'civilized,' making up for lacking Europeanness through self-colonizing practices, populists tend to challenge existing social norms by voicing their support for better relations with the Russian Federation and rejecting plans for NATO membership, offering their own understanding of where the nation belongs in larger civilizational debates.

Mälksoo (2010, p. xiii) characterizes liminality as "in-between situations and conditions where established structures are dislocated, hierarchies reversed and traditional settings of authority potentially endangered." From this perspective we could argue that liminal condition is similar to what discourse theory calls organic crisis – the moment when the meanings of elements are altered and still in the process of acquiring new ones. As I elaborate later on in the dissertation, the collapse of the USSR could be conceptualized as such a crisis and the subsequent time period as liminal with the existing meanings being dislocated, challenged and destabilized.

As I am arguing in the present study, the liminal space that the Georgian society finds itself in, is exploited by different groups with various interests in various ways. There is a liberal narrative around the liminal position vis-à-vis the West, which ascribes to Georgia a second-class status and pushes for self-colonization. This is understood as the recognition of the superiority of the Western cultural power and succumbing to it, without actually being colonized or being part of the colonial system. Meanwhile, on the other hand, a populist discourse also organizes around the liminal positioning of Georgia, dwelling on this concept to propagate anti-Western policies. By claiming that Georgia is not perceived as an equal among the major Western nations, populist discourse subsequently supports their country's membership of the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union, where it will be regarded as an equal among other post-Soviet states. The contradictions between these two competing discourses also heavily rely on the Soviet past and its interpretation. While liberals present the period of 1921–1991 as the years of the occupation, which prevented Georgia's return to its European roots, the populist narrative claims that in the Soviet times, unlike nowadays, Georgian society was highly developed and perceived as an equal by the other members of the USSR.

As was already mentioned, one of the main contributors to the creation of the liminal spaces is the West itself, or more specifically the EU neighbourhood policy. It never denies prospects of membership for those states, but at the same time, leaves them in a constant state of transition. Formally any European country is welcome to apply for membership, in practice however, neither ENP nor EaP provide any clear prospect of membership. Despite countries like Moldova or Georgia expressed their interest in joining the European Union,

membership was not in the offering from Brussels' side. Thus, they were not given sufficient reasons to embark on painful and costly reforms (Park, 2014, p. 6). Signatory countries of the Association Agreement were asked to "swallow a significant chunk of the *acquis communautaire* without sufficient economic support or a clear membership perspective" (Paul, 2015, p. 5). Thus, EaP should be viewed in the context of the EU's attempts to advance good governance and stability in the eastern neighborhood. With each round of the EU enlargement, border management priorities get reactivated or redistributed. This was especially the case with 2004's so-called the "Big Bang," when the union became the immediate neighbour of countries like Ukraine or Moldova; which were regarded as potentially endangering the EU member states with the possible penetrations of human trafficking and organized crime. As the result of the concerns with its own security, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was developed to promote the EU type of order in its neighbouring states, to transfer 'stability, prosperity, shared values and the rule of law' to these countries for the sake of its own security (Balzacq, 2009, Jeandesboz, 2009). As Hadfield argues, the ENP, "by denying standard membership while setting normative standards as benchmarks that will ultimately contribute to its own security," reveals instrumental and cultural asymmetry embedded in the EU's relations with its new neighbours (2009, p. 98). Such absence of "methodologically identified incentives" from the EU might eventually ruin the credibility and legitimacy of the EU actorness, leading to disillusion, and to discontent. And a vacuum will emerge, which will be filled from "the only other continental powerhouse: Russia" (ibid, pp. 103–104). Unlike Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan's unwillingness to deepen the relationship with the EU by signing the Association Agreement can be described as an example of such a trend.

The same argument can be made in relation to NATO enlargement and Georgia's aspirations of membership in the alliance. The communiqué of the NATO Bucharest Summit of 2008 stated: "NATO welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO. We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO" (NATO, 2008), but without any concrete time frame or details. Such vague statements contributed to the further liminal positioning of Georgia, constantly failing to achieve standards high enough to even get a membership action plan (MAP), a commonly regarded technical predecessor of membership in the North Atlantic alliance. Georgia has become the second-largest non-NATO contributor to the ISAF mission. It managed to maintain expenses on defense above 2% of the country's GDP, one of the key NATO requirements, which even most of the member states fail to meet. Georgia is recognized as one of the closest partners of NATO (Stoltenberg, 2016), it opened a joint military training facility with NATO but still falls short of being granted the MAP. This has led to the adoption of a liminal discourse on foreign policy from both sides, that is being democratic and modern, but still not enough. An important factor, which should be noted is that in the discourse of the liberal groups, the EU and NATO are both associated with the Europeanness and membership of both of them with

the main criteria of achieving the full transition from the liminal state. The discourse on NATO and Georgia's aspiration for membership is rather vividly presented by liberals as an issue of identity and culture. The equal mark is usually put between NATO and the EU, both being associated with the Western identity. It should also be noted, that with the end of the Cold War, the discourse on the purposes and legitimation of NATO has shifted within the organization itself as well. It has acquired more normative and ethical dimensions. As, the United States Secretary of State, Powell remarked in 2004, while welcoming new members: "NATO is now transformed, … into an alliance concerned mainly with the defense of common values and common ideas. NATO was determined, above all, to prevent aggression. Now it is determined, above all, to promote freedom, to extend the reach of liberty, and to deepen the peace" (Powell, 2004 as cited in Kuus, 2007, p. 273). Or in other words, the normative dimension brings in to play an important role and physical security threats are translated into more abstract, identity, cultural or civilizational threats.

As Stoicescu (2008) argues, despite liminality being extensively explored and studied in anthropology or cultural studies, it has not really been applied to political science or International Relations. Her research of the cases of Turkey, Ukraine, and Romania contributes to the scholarship as there are almost no studies which look at how liminality has been "translated in the language and the self-image of liminars" (Stoicescu, 2008, p.7). The following research is contributing to this gap in the scholarship, which extensively covers such notions and concepts as borderlands, borders, frontiers, buffers, etc., but fails to fully reflect on the processes taking place in this region, especially from the perspectives of the in-between entities themselves. The following study engages with the case of Georgia, but extensively dwells on Stoicescu's findings and is trying to compare the discourses on the former's liminal identity vis-à-vis the cases of Turkey, Romania, and Moldova. In addition, it introduces the concept of self-colonization and in line with Kuus (2004) tries to look at the idea of the West being created not only in Brussels but in the borderlands of Europe.

2.2 Self-colonization

I am suggesting in this study that the political elites of the societies in-between while dwelling on the liminal positioning tend to employ the tactics of self-colonization vis-à-vis the West. For instance, discourses on implementation and justification of the reform agenda proposed by the Association Agreement with the European Union are better understood if examined from this perspective. This concept is different from classical colonialism as

> according to classical definitions, colonization (and its ideological system, colonialism) refers to the processes of domination in which settlers migrate from the colonizing group to the colonized land (Etkind, 2013, p. 7).

Against this backdrop, according to Kiossev (1995), self-colonization as an analytical concept can be used for cultures that have succumbed to the actual power of the West even without being actually colonized. Kiossev claims that, despite them not having been directly affected by the colonial rule or any major colonial conflicts, historical circumstances transformed them into an extra-colonial "periphery."

> The same circumstances, however, put them in a situation where they had to recognize self-evidently foreign cultural supremacy and voluntarily absorb the basic values and categories of colonial Europe. The result might be named 'hegemony without domination' (ibid, p. 73).

Since Georgia has never been directly colonized by any major Western European empire, the liberal narrative voluntarily tends to recognize the supremacy of the European cultural or other standards vis-à-vis the Russian Empire, Soviet or independence experience. In other words, Self-colonization is the outcome of self-Orientalization as the elites internalize European norms as universal (Morozov, 2015, p. 31).

As the processes of self-colonization take place beyond colonial realities, such as economic exploitation, military or political dominance, social imagination becomes a vital element. Social imagination is understood as "a background intuitive knowledge, a body of stereotypes shared by a community" (Kiossev, 1995, p. 73). Kiossev understands self-colonization as an externally driven process and a parallel can be drawn with Ayşe Zarakol's (2011) *After Defeat. How the East Learned to Live with the West,* where she introduces the notion of stigma into the study of international relations. She defines it as "the internalization of a particular normative standard that defines one's own attributes as discreditable, as it is a label of difference imposed from outside" (ibid, p. 4). This definition fits Georgia's current Euro-Atlantic foreign policy as it is haunted by a constant feeling of somehow always falling short of achieving the standards for NATO or the EU memberships, resulting in the internalization of this second-class status, of lagging behind the West. This stigma, which is the product of liminal positioning, becomes a reference point for two competitive discourses. While liberals are willing to advocate further modernization and Europeanisation to shed the remaining doubts about being European, the populist discourse argues for the slowing down of the integration process in the Euro-Atlantic institutions since "Europe is different." Or as Zarakol (ibid, p. 7) puts it:

> to be torn between the East and the West as a state, as a society, as a nation, is to exist in the international system with the dilemmas that are faced by stigmatized individuals in everyday interaction. The individual with stigma may accept that he has a stigmatized attribute and try to improve his life within the bounds of that awareness – but that choice implies resigning oneself to second-class status.

As a consequence, stigmatized individuals are subject to being perceived as "less than a human being" and such an attitude is backed up by stigma theory. This situation puts the stigmatized actor in a vicious circle it cannot break away from. If an actor becomes defensive of its stigma, such action is perceived as an expression of difference and therefore as a justification of the way it is being treated. It means that a stigmatized actor cannot escape normative standards being imposed upon and within this context, as even rejection of those standards or isolation

> are as much a response to the stigma as embracing the stigma would be. … In other words, the stigmatized agent deals with two kinds of "acceptance issues." One that he requires from the wider society and the other that he requires from himself (Zarakol, 2011, p. 96).

When this is the case, or the actor is stigmatized, two choices are available: either to return to normalcy or to embrace the stigma. The former, according to Zarakol, refers to the attempts of fixing one's discrediting characteristics or simply by 'passing' which can be described as "sweeping under the rug certain historical periods of dissimilarity with the core and constructing a national identity that is centered on a period of common lineage" (ibid, p. 97). As is argued in the following study, the liberal discourse in Georgia focuses on normalcy through fixing differences. To put it in other words, by ascribing itself a second-class status vis-à-vis the West and going through a transformation, the liberal discourse tries to get rid of those elements which are presented as non-European and usually associated with backwardness. Meanwhile, the populist discourse, dwelling on the same stigma, organizes around another approach, which Zarakol calls embracing the stigma. From this perspective, the populist discourse rejects the foreign policy goals oriented towards the European Union or especially towards NATO on the basis of being different or alien.

The sociological notion of stigma itself, which was introduced later on in International Relations and Political Science was developed by Erving Goffman. He suggests that "society establishes the means of categorizing persons and the complement of attributes felt to be ordinary and natural for members of each of these categories" (1963, p. 5). What constitutes stigma then, is the discrepancy between what he calls actual and virtual social identities of the subject. What is important to note is that these differences refer to the attributes which are "deeply discrediting." Additionally, Goffman adds importance to the language of relationship. To put it differently, attributes such as race, gender, sexual orientation or ethnicity are important and rather difficult to change. However, what counts as normal varies over time.

> The crucial point is that stigmas are the result of historical interactions that produce not just deviant behavior, but deviant identities, which may remain "spoiled" even after behavioral change (Adler-Nissen, 2014, p. 146).

Link and Phelan (2001) conceptualize stigma as the convergence of four components: labeling, stereotyping, separation and status loss/discrimination. The first component refers to distinguishing and outlining some particular differences while ignoring others. This leads to the stereotyping of the labeled subjects. "In the third, labeled persons are placed in distinct categories so as to accomplish some degree of separation of "us" from "them" (ibid, p. 367). Lastly, the labeled subject experiences status loss and discrimination as he or she is treated as less of a human. Link and Phelan point out that stigmatization depends on social, economic, and political circumstances, and power relations. Each of those components mentioned above should be explored in greater detail. Starting with the labeling, Link and Phelan suggest that the process of identifying differences which matter is rather social. But once the differences are labeled, then they are taken for granted, as the way things are, and hence the whole process of making these differences socially important is overlooked. This leads to the second aspect of stigma – stereotyping or "linking a person to a set of undesirable characteristics that form the stereotype" (ibid, p. 369). Stereotyping is more easily accomplished, once the border between the Self and the Other is drawn. All the negative characteristics are attributed to the stigmatized person and make him or her different from those who impose the difference. This point can be further explored from the poststructuralist conceptualization of identity with an emphasis on the constitutive Other. But for now, regarding the fourth component, stemming from what has been argued above, as a result of attributing all the negative stereotypes to the stigmatized person, "a general downward placement of a person in a status hierarchy" occurs (Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 371).

This research explores how stigmatisation/being on the receiving end of stigmatisation is internalised by the stigmatised, and subsequently translated into the competition over the national identity (re)production between the discourses. Adler-Nissen (2014, p. 144) argues that one needs to recognize that

> the states that are unable or unwilling to conform to "normal" standards are not merely objects of (failed) socialization. Rather, they are active agents, able to cope strategically with the shame they are subjected to and, in some cases, may even challenge a dominant moral discourse by wearing their stigma as a badge of honour.

According to this passage, she develops a typology of distinct strategies of how states are engaging with stigma: stigma recognition, stigma rejection, and counter-stigmatization. For stigmatized actors the result of the first strategy is transformation of the stigma, the consequence of the second is reversal of the stigma, and the result of the third strategy is the creation of a "separate system of honor" (ibid, p. 155).

Another key aspect of stigmatization, which needs to be explored in relations to identity discourses, is its ability to achieve order during the ontological insecurity in the society (Adler-Nissen, 2014). Following this line of argument,

I am claiming in this part of the thesis that since the collapse of the Soviet Union, this has been the way the Georgian political elite has been trying to make sense of the national identity. But as this study shares the poststructuralist conception of national identity being the product of competing discourses, never stable and in constant flux, it is argued that one cannot pin down one particular strategy of the coping mechanism. To understand discourses on national identity more substantially and possibly shed some light on the various political actors at play, engagement with stigma should be explored based on the competing images of national identity and how it varies from discourse to discourse.

There are two crucial factors Adler-Nissen identifies in the stigmatization process: the degree to which the norms are shared.

> Stigma recognition requires, a shared social ground and that the deviant group or actor sees itself as "failing" normal expectations. If these norms are shared and the moral authority of the stigmatizer is recognized, we can expect that stigmatized states want to become part of the "civilized group" and will try to overcome their stigma or try to pass as normal (2014, p. 154).

However, if this is not the case, then the actors are most likely to reject the norms and "seek solidarity among the deviant." Hence, stigmatization not only serves the purpose of maintaining the order but has the potential to undermine it as well. The second crucial factor is material and social recourses which influence the choice of the strategy. Counter-stigmatization strategies require a substantial amount of recourses to challenge the existing international order.

What I need to note here, is that my research goes beyond the inter-state relationship and explores competing strategies of engagement with the stigma within the domestic dimension. I am interested to find out how the internalization of stigma translates into domestic identity discourses and subsequently expresses itself in the foreign policy trajectories.

Finally, there is a branch of postcolonial scholarship on Central and Eastern Europe and I need to explain where I situate my research in this field. Merje Kuus (2004) examined the European Union's eastern enlargement from the perspective of nesting orientalism. The latter is the concept developed by Bakic-Hayden (1995) who extended the classical notion of Orientalism to the Balkans and proposed a new term to apply to the region. "The gradation of "Orients" that I call "nesting orientalism", which is a pattern of reproduction of the original dichotomy upon which Orientalism is premised" (Bakic-Hayden, 1995, p. 918). To put it differently, Eastern Europe is represented as the Orient but with the gradation within (the Balkans is designated the role of the most "eastern"). "Within the Balkans there are similarly constructed hierarchies" (ibid) and so on. What makes this region relevant to be studied from this context is the history of Ottoman rule, and hence, it is "as such, different from Europe "proper"" (ibid, p. 921). In a similar manner, as Georgia has been separated from the rest of Europe by the Ottoman empire laying between, later

being incorporated in the Russian empire and the Soviet Union, means it is perceived as Oriental by the West and these perceptions are internalized by the discourses on national identity. In this context, creating one's own Orient, other, which is more East than itself, is vital. The Soviet Union/Russia serves such a purpose in contemporary Georgian discourses and mutual historical experiences are labelled as backward, uncivilized, barbaric, etc. Application of the concept of nesting orientalism also addresses the issue with liminality raised by Morozov in his study of Russia's postcolonial identity. He argues that "liminality theory is yet to find a way of dealing with the situations where a liminal in one context (Russia vis-à-vis the West) occupies a dominant position in another, but related, context (Russia's 'internal' periphery)" (2015, p. 24). I believe examining the gradation of the Orient and combining it with liminality deals with this concern.

Transferring these concepts and putting them within the framework of the case study of Georgia, I argue that the liminal positioning of Georgian society within the East/West discourse and subsequent ambiguity regarding its identity becomes the key source of the social imagination. The Empirical analysis I have conducted, illustrates that the never-ending stage of transition, which is perceived as destined to remain always half-complete, produces certain knowledge about the Self which is largely accepted by both sides. At the same time, it maintains the hierarchical discourse of the West being the superior. Subsequently, one might observe two parallel processes taking place at the same time: internalization of certain normative standards concerning modernization, democratization, etc., and stigmatization accompanied by the processes of self-colonization.

One of the vital features of the self-colonial cultures which allow drawing a parallel with the liminal entities is the formers' ambiguity about the Self vis-à-vis the West. More specifically, self-colonizing cultures feel that "they are insufficiently alien, insufficiently distant and insufficiently backward, in contrast to the African tribes" (Kiossev, 1995, p. 75). In such circumstances, the doubt arises, that they are part of the West, as they are Europeans, but somehow not enough so. They are not the Other but not the Self to the full extent either. Hence, such entities are in the constant process of proving their Europeanness. They go back into the past to find the justification, proofs of their belonging to the Self i.e. they engage in the processes of self-colonization.

> The Others – i.e. the neighbours, Europe, the civilized world, etc. possess all that we lack; they are all that we are not. The identity of this culture is initially marked and even constituted by the pain, the shame – and to formulate it more generally – by the trauma of this global absence (ibid, p. 73).

The idea of Europe in such discourses becomes the point of reference for identity production. It becomes something positive, universal, whereas "our own" lacks this universality and self-sufficiency. Or in the words of Kiossev (ibid, p. 75): "the self-colonizing nations suffer a tragic paradox – for them the Alien is

the Universal, but the opposite is also true – the Universal remains forever alien." This makes the process of Self-colonization also Self-traumatizing.

> By adopting these alien universal models, the self-colonizing cultures traumatize themselves – for they also adopt their own inferiority, their own painful lack of essential Substance and Universality (ibid).

This paradox fits within the greater argument of the thesis that the liminal stage or the stage of transition for the countries in between will always remain never-ending and leave them in the permanent stage of second-class status vis-à-vis the West. It is important to note that in the processes of the self-colonization or overcoming the memory of their own "birth-trauma" some cultures go back to the historical past and look for saints, medieval empires, ancient philosophers, works of literature and sometimes even to the mythological stories of the origin of the nation to find the connection linking them with the West, and creating the image of historical continuity.

Approaching the case of Georgia from this perspective I depart from the postcolonial studies of the post-Soviet space with the focus on Russia as a colonizer and focus on how self-colonization vis-à-vis the West takes place. The academic concept of self-colonization should be differentiated from internal colonization which is applied to the case of Russia and concerns the latter's integration into the capitalist world system, leading to the expansion of modernism and development of the rest of the empire (Morozov, 2015). Certainly, these developments were vital for introducing the European style in 19th-century Georgia as a part of the Russian empire, but the focus of this thesis is the contemporary liberal conception of national Self which projects Russia as different or a significant Other not only of itself but also of Europe. Russia becomes something the West is not, and thus, articulation of self-colonization takes places not as a continuation or the legacy of internal colonization in the Russian Empire, but in the context of othering that historical period. Russia becomes not the bearer of European values but rather the opposite and is responsible for "perverting" the Georgian European Self, starting with the annexation in the 19th century.

Within these circumstances, Georgia's membership in the European institutions is seen and represented as the return to its "European roots," joining the "family," it has long been separated from due to the Soviet occupation, through making up for the "lost years." Late Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania's historic speech of 1999, in connection with Georgia's acceptance as a member of the Council of Europe which stated that, "We are so happy, and proud that my generation, our generation, was privileged to announce in this hemicycle these very simple words … I am Georgian and therefore I am European," (Zhvania, 1999) becomes not a simple statement of the fact, but rather a program of becoming European (Kiknadze, 2015, p. 96). Implementation of the agenda put into the Association Agreement with the European Union or following the suggestions and recommendations made by the Venice Commission on the

constitutional amendments should be viewed as the part of this "program" of becoming. As Kuus (2004) argues the EU is largely conceived of as a disciplining power, it is in the minds of the Eastern Europeans even when they are not aware of it. Reforms to be implemented on behalf of the AA and DCFTA are perceived by Georgians as ways of becoming more civilized and modern and hence the EU as a role model has a superior status. Liminal positioning reproduces and maintains the East/West hierarchy with the subject in between attempting to depart from the former and join the latter.

2.3 Relationship between Identity and Foreign Policy

Although this research is focused on the identity (re)production processes occurring on a daily basis, the main focus of the study is the foreign policy agenda, as "foreign policy relies upon representations of identity, but it is also through the formulation of foreign policy that identities are produced and reproduced" (Hansen, 2006, p. 1). By claiming that these two are interlinked and complement each other, Lene Hansen makes an interesting point, which can be also observed in the current Georgian competing conceptions of national Self. The reference to the European identity leads liberals to formulate a pro-Western foreign policy agenda, while in contrast to that, putting oneself as the significant Other of Europe calls for a pro-Russian or more isolationist discourse. To put it in other words, perception of Russia as a threat to its national security, memories of the 2008 August war or Kremlin support for the two breakaway regions, leads part of Georgian society to reproduce its European identity. From this perspective, it can only survive within the European family of states it has always been part of, but due to the Soviet occupation, had been left on the other side of the Iron Curtain. The legacy of the August war and the developments around the two conflict zones is so sensitive, that even populists with their openly pro-Russian foreign policy discourse, cannot deny these facts. But unlike liberals, they see solutions in declaring neutrality or getting on better terms with Russia, which would imply halting the project of integration into the Euro-Atlantic institutions. In other words, it can also be argued that non-Western/non-European identity discourse is reproduced through foreign policy considerations; projecting Russia as the only solution to existing problems while rejecting the West as the troublemaker.

Thus, I am conceptualizing identity in this study following Hansen's framework.

> Policies are dependent upon representations of the threat, country, security problem, or crisis they seek to address. Foreign policies need to ascribe meaning to the situation and to construct the objects with it, and in doing so, they articulate and draw upon specific identities of other states, regions, peoples, and institutions, as well as on the identity of national, regional self (Hansen, 2006, p. 6).

This leads Hansen to conceptualize identity as discursive, political, relational and social. The first two aspects signify that identities are not objective; identity cannot be found somewhere in the extra-discursive realm. In the words of Kuus (2002, p. 94): "Texts about identity do not reveal but produce identity." The relational feature of identity means that it is always given through reference to something else, something it is not. While social features of identity stem from it being articulated collectively, individual identity is constituted within the collective. Identity and policy are understood to be linked through discourses, but not by being in a causal relationship "as representations of identity are simultaneously the precondition for and (re)produced through articulations of policy" (Hansen, 2006, p. 10). Those who formulate foreign policy or are actors interested in altering the existing goals, try to present their claims as legitimate and natural. In this research, identity is studied from this poststructuralist prism, as it helps to identify how certain facts are formed, how they come into being and how their interpretation is affecting foreign policy discourses. As Wodak argues:

> we assume that there is – in an essential sense – no such thing as one national identity. We believe rather that different identities are discursively constructed according to the audience, setting, topic, and substantive content (Wodak et al 2009, p. 4).

This makes national identities malleable, fragile, ambivalent and diffuse. To translate it into the framework of this research, any group, be it either liberal or populist, discursively constructs a national identity according to the foreign policy goals it is supposed to serve. As Stoicescu remarks in her study, foreign policy discourse is a primary discursive site for examination, since it is "connected more explicitly to the issue of the Self/Other nexus and that of self-perception." (2008, p. 8). However, it should be noted that it is not pre-determined how liminality is displayed in the foreign policy discourse, it is rather produced and reproduced through the articulation of identity discourses.

Furthermore, "all states are marked by inherent tensions between the various domains that need to be aligned for an "imagined political community" to come into being" (Campbell, 1998, p. 12). They are instead stuck in the paradox of, on the one hand, demand for the identity, but on the other hand, these processes are impossible to fully resolve. Hence, states are in a permanent stage of reproduction; if that was not the case, then they would simply cease to exist. For these processes to take place, the differentiation of the Self from the Other is vital as "constitution of identity is achieved through the inscription of boundaries that serve to demarcate an "inside" from an "outside", as a "Self" from an "Other," a "domestic" from a "foreigner" (Campbell, 1998, p. 9). Even national identities, while they appear as something natural, "are always contingent constructions made possible through a variety of practices, discourses, and language games, and they can be transformed and rearticulated in different ways" (Mouffe, 2013, p. 45). The creation of identity in such processes always

implies the establishment of a difference. The creation of 'we' can only exist through the formulation of 'they' (ibid). The constitution of the collective identity requires the creation of the frontier between those who belong to the community and those who do not. Regardless of the fact that in the case of liminal entities, such clear divisions are not present, and they are rather blurred and mitigated, it is still unavoidable to define one's own identity within this mix. Because there is no answer to the question of who we are as a collectivity:

> without the 'answer' to these questions, without these 'definitions,' there can be no human world, no society, no culture … The role of the imaginary significations is to provide an answer to these questions, an answer that, obviously, neither 'reality' no 'rationality' can provide… (Castoriadis, 1975, 2005, pp. 146–147).

This research follows Castoriadis in this line of thought and argues that liminal entities constantly need to search for their identities and hence engage in the daily process of identity (re)production through the tactics of self-colonization or other forms of transformation. What should be noted here is that the reference to identity also addresses the ontological insecurity of liminal societies (Mälksoo, 2010, p. 8) – defining who is being secured against whom reassures the collective Self of the subject and constitutes one's security.

2.4 Discourse Theory

I locate my thesis within the broader poststructuralist scholarship on identity. This dissertation follows the poststructuralist mode of discourse analysis as its main methodological research tool. The methodological framework of my research is guided by the broader ontological and epistemological questions introduced by the school of poststructuralist discourse analysis; to be more exact, by the framework developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe in their discourse theory (DT). Theirs is one of the approaches that gets closer to poststructuralists and a Foucauldian understanding of discourse than most of the other discourse-analytical schools. It is important to note that DT is not simply a method as it largely draws on the theoretical and epistemological concepts of poststructuralism and cannot be used in isolation from that context. Hence, it is important to briefly touch upon the roots of this theoretical school and elaborate on the relevance of this research project (to be expanded upon later in the methodology and research design section).

Discourse theory (DT) "aims to describe, understand, and explain how and why particular discursive formations were constructed, stabilized, and transformed" (Torfing, 2005, p. 19). This approach does not claim to provide generalizable theory, instead, it looks at specific historical contexts and circumstances which made certain outcomes possible. Even though it acknowledges the central role of theoretical frameworks, in contrast to the positivist

approaches, instead of applying already existing theory to the empirical data, discourse theory seeks to articulate specific concepts according to the case studied. Hence, the theoretical framework should be flexible and able to be adapted and amended. Historically specific systems of rules, according to DT, produce meanings for objects and actions. Therefore, it sets as its goal to investigate the way in which social reality is constituted through discourses, the discourse itself being "a theoretical framework within which the being of an object is constituted" (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 3). In other words, all objects are objects of discourse. As Young (2004, p. 11) puts it: "The politics of poststructuralism forces the recognition that all knowledge may be variously contaminated, implicated in its very formal or 'objective' structures."

With respect to what has been said above, discourse analysis of how the identity of collective entities such as state or nation is constructed can explain, and even to a certain degree, predict foreign policy outcome (Wæver, 2005). Additionally, because poststructuralism treats identity as discursive, it is important to include in the analysis its relation to other identities. "Because all people construct their self with the help of a complex constellation of collective identifications, these have to be articulated with each other" (ibid, p. 38).

Discourse theory helps to determine the role of Europe in Georgian identity discourse. This approach is most appropriate in problematizing the identity narratives of liminal entities because for poststructuralist approaches, the aim is not to identify true identities, but rather their construction (Laclau, 1994). This perspective of questioning the essentialism of social identity introduces the primacy of politics. It gives political dimension to the processes of formation as well as reveals the impossibility of achieving a full identity (Stavrakakis, 2005). As is illustrated in the theoretical discussions, such a conceptualization regards identity as open for constant negotiations and contestations. Instead of identity as a starting point of politics, it becomes "constructed, maintained or transformed in and through political struggles" (Torfing, 1999, p. 82). Discourse theory helps to problematize taken for granted identifications.

"Poststructuralists argue that 'knowledge' comes to be accepted as such due to the power and prominence of certain actors in society known as 'elites', who then impose it upon others" (Morrow, 2017, p. 56). The way this acceptance is achieved is through the manipulation of discourses, while the 'elites' should be understood in the broader meaning of this term as including not only government officials, but also business leaders, media outlets, academics and scholars, etc. Discourses which are constructed by the elites are called dominant or official discourses. Their power is in their ability to make everything outside of them appear irrational. In the case of Georgia, pro-European foreign policy imbedded in the identity discourse is treated in the thesis as the dominant one. It then comes into practice through language, which places certain actors, concepts and events in a hierarchy, as binary opposites, etc. with the media serving as the primary site where these (re)production processes take place. One of the key arguments of poststructuralist research which relates to this thesis's research design is that "discourse constructs meaning through difference, and

therefore through setting limits, is at the heart of analyzing the role of foreign policy in identity construction" (Diez, 2014, p. 28).

Discourse not only constitutes social reality, but it also delimits what can be uttered or performed. This methodological approach highlights and exposes how:

> conventional ways of thinking and analysis in international relations are unable to point out how certain other possibilities are excluded by these discourses from the very start (Morrow, 2017, p. 58).

Additionally, poststructuralism denies the existence of any essential identity and instead argues for forms of identifications, which are made possible through various social practices (Mouffe, 2013).

Discourse theory can be described as a context-dependent, historical and non-objective theoretical and analytical framework. It is important to bear in mind that in addition to recognizing the impossibility of looking at history from an impartial perspective, as it is always studied and modified from a contemporary gaze, discourse theory neither seeks, nor has any ambition of attaining, objective truth. Rather what DT sets as its goal, is unravelling how concrete discursive processes create the effect of truth (Torfing, 1999, p. 12). Discourse theory contributed to the poststructuralist scholarship by arguing that social agents are unable to achieve their full identity. This condition leads to social antagonism discussed in greater detail below in this chapter. What should be noted here is that the impossibility of full identity is the result of the presence of the Other (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000). Looking at Georgia from this perspective sheds some light on the ambiguous and sometimes even contradictory role orthodox Christianity or the Soviet past plays in foreign policy discourse. In other words, applying Discourse theory to the case of Georgia shifts the focus to how it is possible that both pro-European and Western-sceptic foreign policy discourses refer to orthodox Christianity as one of the legitimization sources. It should be viewed as a floating signifier i.e. a signifier, with a meaning which is subject to competition between various articulations. This is performed through the logic of equivalence and the logic of difference, which are explained below.

The Application of discourse theory to the study of the Europeanisation of the EaP member states provides the possibility of escaping the essentialist approach and looking at these processes from their specific historical contexts, as well as specific discourses, naturalizing them. According to Torfing (2005, p. 14), discourse theory can be characterized as a "relationalist, contextual, and ultimately historicist view of identity formation." This means that identity is shaped in relation to something it is not. This contextual and historicist character suggests that identities should be viewed within a specific discursive and historical context. Discourse theory tries to conceptualize and study a phenomenon which is necessary and impossible at the same time, i.e. it is necessary because without making sense of social phenomena such as national identity, it

is impossible to act upon and formulate foreign policy. While on the other hand, as full fixation of the meaning is not achievable, it remains open to constant rearticulation (Torfing, 2005, p. 4). This is precisely why this approach to studying foreign policy narratives vis-à-vis the European Union and the West in general from the perspective of the EaP member states in particular is the best approach to unravel the contextual and historical mechanisms at work.

Moreover, the concept of dislocation developed by discourse theorists explains how the Soviet Union's collapse facilitated and intensified new articulations when already established meanings through the chains of significations had been dislocated. Dislocation is an event which disrupts the existing discursive system. It means that the discursive system is disrupted, and it prevents the subject from fully determining its identity. The subject has neither a complete structural identity nor a complete lack of one (Laclau, 1990). In other words, the subject enters the liminal phase, which, in discourse theory terms is split and subsequently might disintegrate or try to identify with a political project offering fullness. As the hegemonic narrative fails to give meaning to the new event, political struggles for definition start. This involves competition between discourses to fix the floating signifiers by articulating them with a new set of nodal points (Torfing, 2005, p. 16). Nodal points are also known as empty signifiers and represent notions such as the Nation, the People or Communism. They signify "the lack of a fully achieved community" (ibid) in relation to which other sings are partially fixed.

The application of poststructuralism for the following research is further justified, as the incorporation of this school of thought into the scholarship of International Relations as it encourages taking a bottom-up approach to studying foreign policy or the relationship between the states. Poststructuralism helps to look at the events unrelated to world politics, such as the discussions around celebrating Christmas on 25th of December instead of 7th of January, but specifically from an International Relations perspective. Or how such everyday practices can be seen as attempts to fix meanings and hence "naturalize" or give the impression of objectivity to the identity discourse and to legitimize the foreign policy agenda.

One of the first key epistemological issues which should be examined is the constitution of the identity of the subject. Three stages in the evolution of the subject can be observed in the social sciences. Beginning with the works of Descartes, the so-called Enlightenment subject, which is rational and fully aware and also known as the Cartesian, came into the picture. "The Enlightenment subject was a unified individual with a center, an inner core that was there at birth and developed as the individual grew while remaining essentially the same" (Edkins, 1999, p. 21). Hence, from the Cartesian perspective, this core became the source of the subject's identity. Later on, the idea of the subject evolved into what one could call the sociological subject. It still maintained the idea of the inner core, but it was not self-sufficient in itself, rather it was formed in relation to its "significant other." "The identity of the subject was formed (or constructed) in the interaction between self and society" (ibid, p. 22). Such an

understanding of the subject recognizes the importance and the influence of socialization, culture, and historical and social contexts on the identity formation. But while the distinction between the Self and society is maintained, at the same time the focus of the research becomes the relationship between the two. The last stage in the evolution of the subject in the social sciences is the postmodern subject. One of the key characteristics of such a subject is the nonexistence of a fixed or permanent identity. "Subjectivity is formed and transformed in a continuous process that takes place in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed and alongside the production or reproduction of the social" (ibid). In this context, language becomes the key producer of the identity, as it is understood not as a channel of describing reality but the creator of the effect of the truth itself. It challenges the Cartesian subject which puts emphasis on thoughts, while Structuralism and the works of Saussure on linguistics, present language, not just as a mere tool to present thoughts about the real world, but rather to explore "how the speaking subject was thoroughly embedded in an always already preexisting language system" (ibid, p. 26). In other words, language as the tool of expressing pre-existing thoughts and reality was challenged. That does not necessarily mean that physical objects do not exist, but rather that they gain meaning through discourses. Language becomes a key channel which creates these representations of reality. "Language is a 'machine' that generates, and as a result, constitutes, the social world" (Jørgensen & Philips, 2010, p. 9). Furthermore, language is understood to be structured in discourses, but unlike structuralism, poststructuralists argue that the meaning itself changes from discourse to discourse. From the discourse theory perspective, the subject is not autonomous but rather determined from his/her positioning in the discourse. When parallel discourses try to organize within the same social space, competing positionings of subjects' clash with each other and social antagonism occurs. Following this line of thought, this study sets as its goal to unravel how the positioning of Georgian identity as European, Orthodox and Asian clash with each other as they try to articulate around the same social space i.e. the empty signifier national identity. All these competing discourses construct each other as the constitutive Other.

To explore the poststructuralist relationship between the subjectivity and the social further, these two are not perceived to be separate. Rather its constitution is linked to the constitution of the particular or symbolic order, unlike the previous two stages of the subject's evolution mentioned above. In addition, this school of thought claims that there is no "real community" one can observe. Žizek, for instance, argued that what we call "social reality" is fiction, but that does not necessarily mean that it is less real (Žizek, 1989). The same argument regarding the status of fiction applies to the understanding of the subject in the poststructuralist epistemology. Instead of the distinction between reality and ideas, or between the objective world out there and our subjective perceptions about it, the focus of the DT is the creation of the effect of truth or the attempts to fix meanings through discourses. The idea of a real community as fiction is further explored below when the revision of Marxism by discourse theory is

discussed. At this stage, it must be noted that whenever the text refers to 'subject' it implies the positioning of the subject within a discursive structure.

Discourse theory has foundations in Marxism, but at the same time challenges and modifies some key notions of it. Such a reading of Marxism, which developed within the framework of DT can be labelled as the theory of social development. Laclau and Mouffe, the main authors of the theory, tried to critically revise Marxism's key notion of historical materialism. DT aims to overcome the image of economy as a determinant or the foundation for the superstructure which influences the rest of social relations. In addition, it proposes the primacy of politics over the economy and subsequently challenges the division of society into two classes. The Scholarship on discourse theory has also utilized the definition of hegemony developed by Gramsci and advanced it further (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 32) Hegemony as such is "the expansion of discourse or a set of discourses … by means of articulating unfixed elements into partially fixed moments in a context crisscrossed by antagonistic forces" (Torfing, 1999, p. 101). DT draws on the understanding of the concept by the Italian thinker as class domination, which is exercised and naturalized through civil society institutions such as universities, the media, the Church, and the press. Those entities serve to achieve/manufacture consent within the population and subsequently reach domination. Against this backdrop, discourse theory characterized hegemonic discourse as the result of articulation, which itself is "practice establishing relations among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice" (Laclau & Mouffe 1985, p. 105).

Discourse theory was able to break the context of class struggle and economic determinism and argue for the primacy of politics. The latter itself is not to be understood as a particular state, government or specific policies, but rather "an ontological dimension of social relations" (Howarth, 2015, p. 7). The argument DT put forward is that one cannot speak of some objective rules in the history of mankind that divide society into classes. Groups are always created and produced through discursive processes, which themselves are what constitute the political for Laclau and Mouffe (Jørgensen & Philips, 2010). Discourse theory further challenges the historical materialism of classical Marxism by critically questioning its understanding of society as a totality. As the scholarship on poststructuralist discourse analysis argues, no discourse is able to achieve the permanent fixation of meanings and hence, one cannot talk about society as an objective totality which is affected and divided as the result of economic relations. Discursive processes try to produce society as a totality, but as it remains unachievable, it is destined to always remain as an imaginary. The discourse which makes an attempt to articulate society as a nation, class or any other similar totality ends up in the paradox that – "society only exists as the vain attempt to institute that impossible object: society" (Laclau 1990 as cited in Edkins, 1999, p. 131). In other words, what discourse does is attempt to dominate the field of discursivity by articulating meanings around the nodal points (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985).

To relate this contest over the fixation of the society as a totality to the context of this research, one can argue that when liberal political discourse in Georgia speaks of European/Western Georgia, the image they articulate as a totality is different from the alternative discourse on foreign policy, i.e. the one a nationalist or populist would have in mind, when speaking of the Georgian nation, state or culture. In the words of discourse theory, terms used for the characterization of the society as a totality, like the one (nation, state, country, etc.) are floating signifiers. Discourses compete to invest those signifiers with different meanings by expanding their chain of significations and subsequently, alter and modify their identity. Here discourse theory introduces the concept of "the myth" – a distorted reality, which at the same time is vital and constitutive, as it establishes "a necessary horizon for our acts" (Jørgensen & Philips, 2010, p. 39). As the condition for the emergence of the myth is structural dislocation, the former acquires the hegemonic role of constituting the new space of representation (Torfing, 1999). In the context of this particular research, the myth of Georgia as European, Orthodox Christian, etc. establishes the ground platform for political elites and groups to argue for very specific foreign policy agendas or legitimize domestic reforms, which sometimes can be very unpopular. The logic of equivalence simplifies the political space, while the logic of difference increases its complexity (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985).

It is important to note that as DT argues for the impossibility of achieving the total fixation of meanings, the myth becomes a "metaphor for an absent fullness" (Torfing, 1999, p. 115). Myths describe the fullness of society that can never be achieved. "Moreover, a myth has to remain empty because any attempt to actually fill a myth with specific meaning, … would mean to subject the myth to everyday political struggles, thus ending its mythical status" (Nabers & Stengel, 2019, p. 109). Identity then, can be constructed by drawing a line between the mythical Inside and a negative Outside. If the dominance of one particular myth is maintained on a continuous basis, it is transformed into a social imaginary. This research illustrated that such a social imaginary in liminal states vis-à-vis the European Union is the process of becoming European. In sum, both the myth and social imaginary serve to construct society as "positive and fully structured identities," with the latter providing a horizon for meaning and action while the former represents reading principles embedded in values, norms, etc. and constitutes a new objectivity (Torfing, 1999, p. 115).

One of the last points, where discourse theory is critical of classical Marxism is the collective class identity division. This criticism is in line with the discussion on the subject of identity mentioned above, so it is not elaborated on here. But one important notion which should be mentioned is that despite the identity of the subject being determined by his or her positioning in the discourse, DT sees the subject as being overdetermined. This is the result of constant parallel discourses at work, which (re)position the subject from discourse to discourse. This leads to the concept of social antagonism, which emerges as the result of the clash of mutually exclusive subject positionings. Within the framework of this research, I am arguing that the positionings of the

subject – Georgian national identity – in parallel discourses of populist and liberal groups are mutually exclusive and give rise to the social antagonism. The nation as orthodox Christian, Caucasian and post-Soviet is usually articulated in the negation and exclusion of the West, Europe, etc. which is "perverted," "ungodly," and a stranger to Georgia. Meanwhile, the discourse of liberals articulates the subject's identity in the negation of the Soviet legacy, Russia, etc. As is explored in the empirical section of this thesis, this social antagonism translates into the contestation over the foreign policy agenda, which is constituted by identity and at the same time constitutes the latter. Social antagonism, according to Torfing (1999), can be understood as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it serves as a source of stabilizing a particular discursive formation. As this research explores the change of the discursive construction of identity over time, the case study illustrates that the process of othering Russia became the key stabilizing factor for the discursive formation constructed by the post-Rose Revolution Georgian government until the end of its term. Construction of the political opposition as the carriers of the Soviet/Russian identity and hence uncivilized, corrupted, old-fashioned, etc. became vital for the reproduction of the government as the "beacon of democracy," the sole political group who was loyal to Georgia's European cause. The 2008 August war further contributed to the stabilization of the country's Western identity discourse and even managed to achieve a hegemonic intervention for a while, i.e. it became "accepted as the truth and/or common practice within the society or a particular policy realm" (Wullweber, 2015, p. 80). But, on the other hand, social antagonism, if the historical conditions are right for it, can contribute to destabilization and disruption.

The main argument of the following thesis is that the protracted liminal stage of transition, the never-ending process of becoming European, alters circumstances in a way that allows social antagonism to become the destabilizing force in social identity construction. The collapse of the Soviet Union dislocated existing discursive constructions and the on-going Euro-Atlantic integration of Georgia has been the source of social antagonism between discourses competing for hegemony ever since.

A key concept which was developed in relation to the social antagonism is the notion of the constitutive outside. "Social antagonism is defined in terms of the presence of the constitutive outside which, at the same time, constitutes and denies the identity of the inside" (Laclau, 1990: 17 as cited in Torfing, 1999, p. 129). It stems from the idea that social identity formation rises through the processes of negation of the radical other. "Every objectivity, every identity, is constructed through the assertion of difference, the determination of an 'other' that serves as it's 'exterior' and the consequent establishment of a frontier between interior and exterior" (Mouffe, 2013, p. 45). In other words, discourse is the system of social relations, which involves the drawing of political frontiers between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000). Hence, the constitutive outside is constructed through social antagonism, which itself involves the exclusion of certain identities, meanings of which are

articulated through the chain of equivalence (Torfing, 2005). The latter itself implies the 'sameness' of the elements being excluded. As the chain of equivalence keeps expanding, in order for the discursive system to stabilize itself, the constitutive outside should be constructed as the threatening other, and as a result defines the unity and the limits of the system. Translating this into the collective identity formation context, the idea of "we" is created through the formulation of "them." This process forms the chain of equivalence with a negative meaning and constitutes the outside as the antithesis of the current discourse. For instance, Europe or the West is constructed in liberal discourse in Georgia by negating the "barbaric" Other. Russia, the Soviet Union, the Russian empire, etc. are united in such discourses through the chain of equivalence which defines them as "uncivilized," "backward," or any other characteristic, which would have one common element – the lack of Western civilization. This leads to the understanding of social antagonism as a constitutive of social identity. As "the desire to annihilate the antagonistic force that prevents us from achieving our full identity" (Torfing, 1999, p. 129) is what makes us "we". The illusion of removing the antagonistic forces such as a post-Soviet mentality, in the case of contemporary Georgia, constitutes the formation of the latter's European identity. This process is also the same, but in reverse in the case of the populist discourse, which constructs its identity in opposition to the "perverted" West. The chain of equivalence can be said to be developed in the process of the negation of the radical other and constitution of one's identity from the particular to the universal. But the latter, from the DT perspective, is rather an "empty space whose content is partially fixed in and through political struggles between the particular groups caught up in the chain of equivalence" (Laclau, 1995, p. 158). The discourse, which manages to successfully fill the empty space of the universal, is what can be called a hegemony. Here the concept of an empty signifier appears. It arises from specific political processes, "in which a particular statement, signifier or practice is transformed into a universality" (Wullweber, 2015, p. 80). It means that universal, general interests as such are not objectively given, instead, they are constituted through discourses. Hence, the idea of emptiness, which should be filled by the actors articulating the competing discourses. In the case of this particular research, such empty signifiers are Christianity, Europeanness and Georgian. Political actors struggle with each other to transform the particularity of these signifiers into universals.

As mentioned previously, in the following study I argue that the liberal discourse was able to achieve a hegemonic intervention during the 2008 August war and for the short period afterward. Laclau and Mouffe (1993) suggest that hegemonic intervention can cease social antagonism by allowing one discourse to take a dominant position. When such a development takes place, it manages to overcome the ongoing collision between the subject positionings through articulation within the social antagonism, instead of simply uniting forces around a set paradigmatic interest (Torfing, 1999, p. 14). In other words, a time span analysis of the identity articulation processes in Georgia revealed that the

actual ontological security threats (threats to the self-perception of the state) coming from Russia gave a considerable boost to the pro-Western foreign policy agenda and, in DT terms, achieved objectivity. But as the fixation of meaning attempted by discourse is never permanent and fully achieved, it is argued within this thesis, that the never-ending stage of liminality, the process of becoming European but somehow not fully so, led to the return of the social antagonism, immediately after the post-war hysteria died down.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Research Design

This research is designed as a single case study, which is defined in the literature as "the detailed examination of an aspect of a historical episode to develop or test historical explanations that may be generalizable to other events" (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 5).

The case study approach shares the same epistemological logic as statistical methods and formal models in developing logically consistent models and theories and testing them in relation to the empirics. But at the same time, methodological reasoning is different. The aim of the following chapter / section is to provide an explanation of why a single case study as a research design is the most appropriate framework for the research problem under examination. In the next pages, I will demonstrate the advantages of the case study method vis-à-vis statistical or other quantitative research design regarding the case selection, operationalization, and conceptualization.

Focusing on a single case study in International Relations allows for a 'thick description' i.e. knowing more about less, rather than knowing less about more, as would be the case with comparative case studies. Bennett and Elman (2007, p. 171) argue that case study methods are more applicable in this field "because of the complexity of IR and the ubiquity of phenomena that in many respects are sui generis, thus rendering many puzzles in IR difficult to model formally and to test statistically." Furthermore, according to Gerring (2017, p. 30), the goal of a case study is not only the explanation of the phenomenon it is looking at but also to shed light on a larger group of cases. It is the element of generalization, which makes the case study valuable.

George and Bennett (2005) identify four key advantages of case studies. Firstly, the case study method, unlike statistical or formal modelling, provides stronger conceptual validity. As for such variables as democracy, power, political culture, etc. context is very important. Statistical studies, which put together a large number of cases, runs the risk of "conceptual stretching," as they fail to take into consideration the dissimilarities of those cases (ibid, p. 19). Secondly, case studies have a comparative advantage in studying deviant or outlying cases and hence, developing new hypotheses. The third advantage of case studies is the possibilities it offers to examine in detail how the casual mechanisms are at work within the case. The single case study helps to identify particular, context-specific intervening variables, which might end up being left out in the statistical models. Lastly, according to George and Bennett, case study methods have a relative advantage of being able to take into account complex causal relations.

In addition to the advantages, the case study research certainly also has its own limitations and possible pitfalls. Case studies are vulnerable to selection

bias. The single case study can be designed in a way that it deliberately selects the particular outcome as the starting point of the research. However, one of the main objectives of interpretive readings of case studies is precisely to demonstrate the dominant explanations, "exposing them not as truth but as narratives that are discursively constructed, assigned particular meanings, and reproduced from partial or limited evidence" thus indicating the possibility of other articulations and meanings of the same phenomenon (Lynch, 2014, p. 14). To further account for the potential selection bias, I rely on the knowledge and findings of the existing literature and use them as guiding tools.

Case studies also fail to address the issue of how much the gradation of a certain variable affects the outcome. They can identify how and whether the variable mattered to the outcome but are rather limited in measuring the scope of the relationship. One way to address this limitation is to argue that the case study can be regarded as a powerful tool for assessing the necessity and sufficiency of the variable, as one single counterexample study can falsify such deterministic claims (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 25). In response to the criticism that case studies have a problem with the degree of freedom, George and Bennett argue that the problem is a misunderstanding or because of the definition of the case as the phenomenon in which only one measure of the variable is reported. "In fact, each qualitative variable has many different attributes that might be measured". Unlike the researcher who applies statistical methods, case study research treats variables qualitatively. It does not put together all the variables to get "fewer variables and more degree of freedom" (ibid, p. 28). It is important to mention that the lack of representativeness is not necessarily a drawback of case study research. Instead, great explanatory richness within the one case may actually lead to less detailed understanding of other (similar or related) cases. In other words, despite the possibility the case study has to unravel the particular causal mechanisms at work, which can be generalized, the effects of such mechanisms would vary from case to case and be very context specific. "Case study researchers are more interested in finding the conditions under which those conditions and their outcome arise" (ibid, p. 31). Taking into consideration this possible pitfall of the case study research design, my thesis avoids overgeneralization of the findings and instead aims to uncover mechanisms, which might be in operation in less or more extreme cases, when applied across the other cases.

The following case study of Georgia is designed to be disciplined configurative, which George and Bennett (2005, p. 75) define as one, which uses already established theories to explain a particular case. In other words, this research does not set as its goal to establish a new theoretical framework to research the Eastern neighbourhood of the European Union, but instead takes existing scholarship on liminality, self-colonization, and the relationship between foreign policy and identity, and extends it to a new case. This also means that the thesis serves a partly heuristic purpose as well, as it combines the concepts mentioned above, into an interdisciplinary theoretical and methodological research tool, which could provide theory testing and illustrate the need for a

new approach to studying the identities of the regions in transition in International Relations' scholarship. It is important to note that the contingent or typological generalizations are the ones which are usually drawn from the case studies. They "build on and go beyond improved historical explanations" (ibid, p. 111) but at the same time limit the risk of overgeneralization. From this perspective, despite the extension of the findings of this study to other similar cases, it provides important points around which future research can develop and expand. Such a case study can also be qualified as estimating, meaning that it estimates causal effect instead of developing a new explanatory theory (Gerring, 2017). To be more precise, it represents the longitudinal type of estimating case study as it takes a single country (Georgia) and observes how the constitution of national identity as European changes over the time period and how this is affected by the liminal positioning, as well as how these articulations play out in the foreign policy discourse.

3.2 Methodological Tools of Discourse Theory

Discourse theory, belonging to the group of poststructuralist methodological approaches, does not investigate observable facts nor the real intentions of the actors. Instead, it looks at the emergence of discursive formations and the constitution of social being (Torfing, 2005). From the perspective of discourse analysis as a research method, there is no way of discovering real causes, but rather the processes which resulted in certain outcomes (Auchter, 2014, p. 35). Or as Wæver (2017, p. 41) puts it:

> Politics is by definition always in between individuals, and as such it is about regulating what can be done in a sphere that is stretched between us. Therefore, it is neither decisive nor easily researchable whether President Bush was motivated by religious concerns in his politics, but it is possible to study what his discourse reveals about what can be done in the name of religion in the political sphere…

This thesis is applying the methodological framework of discourse theory to the case study of Georgia. Hence, it borrows the research framework developed in the works of Laclau and Mouffe. However, as the focus of their work is mostly on theory development and does not include so many concrete tools for methodological analysis, it is important to supplement the methodological framework with poststructuralist discourse analysis (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 24). Hence, I will rely on the methodological tools developed by Hansen and Wæver.

   Furthermore, what should be noted is that discourse-analytical approaches, despite critique from the positivist methodological school, can go beyond simply offering a critical problematization of the issue, to the explanatory level which "must be seen as constitutive rather than causal" (Diez, 2014, p. 31). Such constitutive effects of discourse help to explain how certain policies were

enabled through meaning construction processes. In other words, this research follows Doty (1993) by instead of posing 'why-questions', examines 'how-possible' questions to make the analysis of foreign policy more substantial. Unlike the former, which presupposes a certain social and discursive back-ground as unproblematic, the latter examines the meaning production processes and thus tries to explain not "why a particular outcome was obtained, but rather how the subjects, objects, and interpretive dispositions were socially constructed such that certain practices were made possible" (ibid, p. 298).

In order for an action to be performed by the actor or the agent, certain meanings must already be in place. For the policymaker to justify and argue for the implementation of a certain policy, articulation should take place, which illustrates how it is related to the boarded image or the idea of "we," the nation. Thus, it must be related to, and drawn from, the discursive structure (Wæver, 2002). But at the same time, discursive space also sets the limits for particular articulation processes. Hence, with the how-possible question, the research framework looks at how these particular subjects' positionings and the relationship between them are discursively constructed and as a result, enables and limits foreign policy agenda. Discourse or "the context in which an articulation occurs" and policy articulation are mutually constitutive (Diez, 2014, p. 32). Discourses constitute articulation and vice versa, but they are not in a causal relationship.

As DT is the branch of the discourse-analytical approaches closest to the poststructuralist scholarship, poststructuralist discourse analysis and discourse theory are used as synonyms in this study. Before the data selection and sampling section, it is therefore important to elaborate on the methodological tools and some key concepts of discourse theory.

In order to proceed, the definition of discourse should first be provided. Discourse is the result of articulatory practice which itself is "any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of articulatory practice" (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 105). Doty (1996, p. 6) suggests that "a discourse delineates the terms of intelligibility whereby a particular "reality" can be known and acted upon." Therefore, when we speak of discourse, it is not limited to a specific group of texts, but also implies social practices.

Thus, discourse is "a decentred structure in which meaning is constantly negotiated and constructed" (Laclau, 1988, p. 245). The important characteristic of discourse from the perspective of the DT is that permanent, fixed totality of the meaning cannot be achieved, therefore it is in a constant process of renegotiating and attempting to reach complete closure (Torfing, 1999).

> A discourse is inherently open-ended and incomplete. Its exterior limits are constituted by other discourses that are themselves also open, inherently unstable, and always in the process of being articulated (Doty, 1996, p. 6).

Hence the focus of discourse analysis becomes "the productive effects of articulations … and how this then shapes the debate" (Diez, 2001, p. 21). While discourse analysis itself refers to the practice of analyzing raw empirical materials and information (including institutions, organizations, etc.) as discursive forms (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000). In such an understanding of discourse as the partial fixation of the meaning, it is important to differentiate between moments and elements. The latter refers to the signs whose meanings are not fixed or yet defined by their contrast to others, while the former are the signs, which are already defined. This leads to the concept of discursive struggle, which refers to the competition over the definition of the subject's identity among the various discourses. Hence, discourse theory argues that all social phenomena are the result of discursive constructions. This makes Laclau and Mouffe's approach different from other discourse-analytical frameworks, as DT does not distinguish between discursive and non-discursive practices.

> The more we analyse so-called non-discursive complexes – political interventions, technologies, productive organizations, etc. – the clearer it becomes that there are relational systems of differential identities, which are not shaped by some objective necessity (God, Nature, or Reason) and which can only, therefore, be conceived as discursive articulations (Torfing, 1999, p. 90).

Another important concept which is introduced in DT and is applied in the following case study is nodal points. They are privileged signs around which discourse starts to organize. "The nodal point creates and sustains the identity of a certain discourse by constructing a knot of definite meanings" (Torfing, 1999, p. 98). The meaning of signs is defined in relation to other signs. To put the process in simpler terms,

> a variety of signifiers are floating within the field of discursivity as their traditional meaning has been lost; suddenly some master signifier intervenes and retroactively constitutes their identity by fixing the floating signifiers within a pragmatic chain of equivalence (ibid, p. 99).

Field of discursively is understood as all the possible meanings that a sign could have, and which are excluded by the particular discourse. Every discourse then becomes the expansion of the signifying chains itself to partially fix the meanings of the floating signifiers within the field of discursivity. Here it is important to mention the distinction between the discursive and the discourse. The latter is a partially achieved fixation of the meaning of signifiers, however, the field of discursivity, is where the "unfixed elements of a disintegrated discourse" fall (Torfing, 1999, p. 93). Disruption of the conditions of possibilities upon which the partial fixations achieved by concrete discourse rests, might lead to the reincorporation of other meanings, which were previously excluded by the discourse or in other words, would be drawn and transferred from the field of discursivity to the discourse. Following the fluctuation of the

discourse on Georgia's Europeanness over the time span is an example of such a development taking place.

Signifying chains, which are chains of difference and chains of equivalence, are the links elements have with the meaning invested in them. The formation process of the chain of equivalence was discussed in the theory section above. What is important to note, is that in order for the chain of equivalence to expand, the presence of a constitutive outside is vital. This study is identifying master signifiers or nodal points around which the chain of equivalences of each discourse starts to articulate. It is argued that the nodal point of what this study labels as the liberal discourse, is Europeanness, hence the chain of equivalence starts organizing around this master signifier and negates Russia as a constitutive Other, which is articulated as barbaric, Asian, backward, etc. In contrast, nationalist-populist discourse organizes around Orthodox Christianity and constructs the chain of equivalence while negating the West as the other. The key to discourse theory as a research tool is to identify nodal points. Once this takes place, then the study shifts its focus to how identity is constituted through discourses, and it itself takes place through the formation of the chain of equivalence.

As the study follows Hansen's (2006) conceptualization of identity, it is important to further elaborate on what she calls "particular attention to the methodology of reading" (ibid, p. 2). All the texts that constitute the foreign policy debates are organized around common themes, "around certain constructions of identity" and as a result, foreign policy debates become bound together by a small number of discourses. She suggests guidelines for how to identify and select a small set of discourses, the so-called the "basic discourses," which can provide a lens, through which one can see the representations and policies as systematically connected, or key points around which the disagreement within the debates structure. This research follows those methodological guidelines for identifying the basic discourses.

First, basic discourses are based on the reading of a larger number of texts. Within the scope of the following research, not only official statements and speeches are analyzed, but also TV shows, commercials, symbols, etc. Secondly, according to Hansen, "basic discourses should be built on the explicit articulation of key representations of identity, for example: "' The Balkans' and 'genocide'…" (Hansen, 2006, p. 53). In the case of Georgia, the following research is examining how the articulation of the European identity is expressed within the mainstream narrative. Hansen further argues that basic discourse should draw upon "available conceptual histories of the representations chosen" and should be composed of Others and Selves being differently articulated as spatial, temporal or ethical constructions of identity. She also claims that due to the fact that basic discourses articulate different Selves and Others, it is logical to expect that they will argue for different foreign policies. The final point Hansen makes in terms of tracing those discourses is that

it is likely that at least one discourse will be argued relatively quickly as an issue manifests itself on the foreign policy agenda, while the other basic discourse(s) will be argued in response to and in criticism of this position (ibid).

To translate this to the scope of this study, the pro-European discourse on foreign policy, due to security issues, the 2008 war legacy, and historical experience, remains the dominant basic discourse, and is manifested in the foreign policy agenda, such as signing the Association Agreement with the EU and openly declaring the desire to join both the EU and NATO. Meanwhile, one can also observe the development of an alternative, populist basic discourse, which is organized as a critical response to the former and tries to challenge its dominance by the articulation of different foreign policy goals.

There is an important methodological aspect which should be mentioned here. Poststructuralists take the understanding of identity one step further from constructivists and regard it as in the process of constantly being made. Constructivism in a similar manner to realists and their take on national interests, sees identity as unitary. Furthermore, despite conventional constructivists allowing more scope for non-causal theory, they still "mobilize causal concepts of testing to assess theoretical validity" (Hansen, 2006, p. 9). For poststructuralists, on the other hand, what constitutes 'proper knowledge', is always historically and politically situated and hence not derived from a theory's ability to uncover causal truths (ibid, p. 10).

Another concept which I apply from Hansen's methodological framework is *intertextuality* or that "every individual text is always located within a shared textual space" (Hansen, 2006, p. 55). It helps to examine not what the texts are that are being quoted or linked by other texts, but rather how they are read and interpreted. Intertextuality can be implicit (secondary sources, conceptual, catchphrase) and explicit (quotes, references) (ibid, p. 57).

While the discourse analysis of the text is performed, it is important to look at how they are presented in "later re-readings" and how these two differ from each other. In the words of Hintz (2016, p. 342) intertextual analysis "involves inductively recovering existing identities by comparing oral, written, and image-based texts, organically constructing collective proposals that cohere around shared understandings."

Such intertextual reading within the framework of discourse analysis helps to understand how discourse embedded within the official texts and representations is projected to the wider public and legitimized. It is also useful within the scope of this study, as it locates debates on identity and foreign policy outside the official discourses enabling the highlighting of how different types of actors, who claim to be detached from politics, try to affect the foreign policy goals of the country.

This leads to the concept of *interdiscursivity* which "indicates that discourses are linked to each other in various ways" (Wodak, 2008, p. 3). Such interdiscursive reading, in addition to intertextuality, helps to identify how the discourse on security for instance or discourse on human rights, urbanization of

the city, etc. is linked to foreign policy goals and how the latter are themselves interlinked with discourses on identity.

Texts to be analyzed to identify basic discourses should meet the following criteria: they should include a clear articulation of identities and policies, should be widely read and attended to and should have "the formal authority to define a political position" (Hansen, 2006, p. 85). Based on this, as was already mentioned, the materials which were analyzed as texts not only included official statements, but also TV shows, documentaries and visual images where the articulation of these identities was clearly present.

Another methodological tool that is applied in this research is Foucauldian discourse analysis a.k.a. the *genealogical reading of texts*. This kind of analysis rejects universals and starts research by asking what kind of history one can do when universals do not exist (Foucault, 1979). What Foucauldian discourse analysis studies is how a particular regime of truth makes something that does not exist able to become something, which does exist. Tickner (2001, pp. 47–48) on the other hand, defines genealogy as a style of historical thought that uncovers power/knowledge relations. "Claiming that there can be no one true story or historical narrative, genealogy situates knowledge in a particular time and place and demonstrates how it is constituted from particular perspectives."

Genealogical reading contributes to the research by helping to examine the processes which are behind the constitution of what we come to believe as irrefutable, irreducible truth, as well as, bringing power into play as an analytical principle (Procacci, 1991, p. 151). Whether it is a study of the concept of sovereignty (Bartelson, 1995), the chemical weapons taboo (Price, 1995) or the emergence of the Anglosphere and its effects on international relations (Vucetic, 2011), genealogy, instead of asking 'what happened and why?' asks "'how did X get here?' or 'how did Y become possible?'" (Vucetic, 2011b, p. 1303). Application of genealogy in International Relations examines how particular representations take hold and produce a specific political effect.

3.3 Case Selection and Data Sampling

The case of Georgia has been selected as its positioning between the West and the East has always been ambiguous. The reasons for such a liminal condition can be traced to geography, being located at the crossroads of Europe and Asia and Georgia's subsequent historical experiences. Georgia being an Orthodox Christian kingdom, lost its connection to the rest of Europe after the collapse of the Byzantine empire and became surrounded by Muslim empires (i.e. Persian and Ottoman) which highly influenced its further development. The Soviet experience increased Georgia's alienation from the West even more, and the dominant Euro-Atlantic integration discourse is framed within this need to recover what has been lost. It is important to note that while the concept of liminality has been widely explored in the context of the Baltics, Turkey or Ukraine, as well as internal-colonization being applied to Russia (see Etkind,

2011; Mälksoo, 2010, 2012, 2016; Morozov, 2015; Rumelili, 2004, 2012, 2017), a country like Georgia remains largely outside of the lens of these studies. This research is trying to address this gap, which is a relatively recent phenomenon, as Georgia came into the immediate neighbourhood of the EU after the 2004 enlargement.

The timeline for the selection of texts which were analyzed is from 1999 to 2017. This particular year was selected as the starting point of the analysis, because it was the year Georgia joined the Council of Europe and the famous phrase by the late Prime Minister, Zhvania (1999), was coined: "I am Georgian and therefore I am European." 2017 is the year when visa-free travel with the EU was granted to Georgia, thus seemingly marking a major milestone in the closer association with the European Union.

Despite start date of the date from the analysis being1999, as outlined above, interdiscursivity and intertextuality are vital tools for poststructuralist discourse analysis. In addition, with the passage of the time, one is able to trace the gradual disruption or destabilization of the regime of truth created through the dominant discourses (Morrow, 2017). Hence, the empirical chapter will also frequently refer to texts, which were created much further in the past, as the contemporary discourses are deeply embedded into this history and refer to them.

While considering the data to be analyzed there are a couple of points to be taken into consideration. Firstly, that discourse is the result of the political decision taken not on the bases of rational calculations by conscious individuals, but rather "an endless series of de facto decisions, which result from a myriad of decentred strategic actions undertaken by political agents aiming to forge a hegemonic discourse" (Torfing, 2005, p. 15).

In other words, the list of texts under investigation should be extended to unofficial documents and to ones, which might seem, at first glance, unrelated (the branding of archaeological findings, winners of competitions at the academy of arts, etc.). Secondly, according to Wæver (2005, p. 35), discourse analytical approaches work on public texts. This means that discourse analysis does not look for the motives, hidden intentions or secret plans of the actors. It stays at the level of discourses, which gives discourse theory a methodological advantage, especially in the field of foreign policy where much is hidden.

According to what has been outlined above, there is no limit to what can be considered as the data for discourse theory. Resulting from this assumption, all available research methods can be useful in processing data and incorporating it into the research project. As I have already mentioned, the methodology of discourse theory needs to be complemented using tools from other discourse analytical approaches.

Finally, the research strategy for discourse analyst is "to look for key concepts and their mutual relationship. One asks how the text argues, not what it says" (Wæver, 2005, p. 41). For instance, in a debate on Bosnia in the German parliament, the interesting question is not who takes what position regarding what intervention, but how they argue their case. What are the

powerful categories on which the argument rests, how are they related, are some concepts presented as, by necessity, companions (for example, 'us', Europe, Germans, civilization), and are some presented as self-evident opposites (for example, Balkan and peace or nationalism and Europe)? More interesting than the arguments made are the assumptions not stated, but necessary for the argument to be meaningful, the structural arrangements of key concepts, and chains of equivalence and oppositions. There can be many of these, but one tries to boil them down to the most general and recurrent axes of valorisation, which enable the text to generate meaning (ibid, p. 41). In other words, this thesis aims to map out discourses and illustrate how the chain of equivalence is expanding in the field of discursivity. The public sources are the primary sites where these articulations take place. As Wæver (2002, p. 26) argues: "If one sticks rigorously to the level of discourse, the logic of the argument remains much clearer – one works on public, open sources and uses them for what they are, not as indicators of something else."

In Appendix A is the full list of texts selected for the analysis. It consists of inauguration speeches delivered by presidents, several strategic and foreign policy documents as well as newspapers.

The following newspapers were selected, as they are widely read and represent one of the two discourses on national identity suggested above. To be more precise, Asaval-Dasavali and Saqartvelo da Msoflio clearly articulate an exclusive national identity which is based on xenophobia, homophobia, and a portrayal of the Orthodox Christianity as the master signifier. As a result, it is expected that such identity discourse will reproduce the foreign policy agenda which is oriented towards the Kremlin. According to the study from 2019 titled "rusuli samq'aro sakartveloshi" ("Russian World in Georgia") published by the Media Development Foundation, ist'oriuli memk'vidreoba ("historical legacy"), an organization behind the newspaper Sakartvelo da Msoflio, is the official partner in Georgia of the foundation "Russian World" (Pataridze, 2019, p. 4). The latter itself is an institution founded by President Putin's decree in 2007 with the aims of promoting Russian culture and language abroad. The projects supported by the foundation include the celebration of the Victory Day on the 9th of May, the so-called march of the immortal regiment, funding of studies for Georgian students in Russia, and so on (ibid). In comparison, two other newspapers in the list reproduce the dominant discourse with an emphasis on Georgia's pro-European future. Each year for the newspapers was divided into three periods, January-March, June-August and October-December and one issue from each period was randomly selected. The aim of the discourse analysis is to map out and illustrate the main trends, rather than cover all the texts available, which is physically impossible. Therefore, data sampling of the printed media in this manner is justified, as it aims to simply unravel and show the basic tendencies in the discourses.

Regarding the TV shows on the list, they are the products of Rustavi 2, which is one of the most popular and widely broadcasted TV channels throughout the country. Additionally, the two shows mentioned above, have a clear

reference to Georgia's European identity and engage in the process of othering Russia and the Soviet past of the country.

When it comes to official documents, these particular texts (foreign policy strategies, national security strategies, and presidential addresses) were selected in order to examine how does discourse (re)produce and replicate in concrete policies and practices. Since the purpose of my research was to examine and illustrate the constitutive relationship between foreign policy and national identity, I believe these documents are one of the primary sources. Here it also needs to be mentioned that since the pro-Western foreign policy has been dominant in Georgian politics for more than two decades, there are no similar documents for challenging articulations. Hence, in the case of the populist narrative, empirics are limited to party documents and media.

In addition to the systematized sampled data listed above, interviews, statements, and speeches made by officials, symbols, and institutions which are relevant and refer to the identity discourses identified within this research, were analyzed.

Finally, despite this study being designed as strictly qualitative due to the theoretical and methodological framework applied, some quantitative data, which was already available prior to conducting my research, is used to further illustrate the argument. The dataset used was produced by the Caucasus Barometer, which itself is the project of the Caucasus Research Resource Centre. It provides the results of surveys for all three South Caucasian republics on various social and political issues. In addition, results from the National Democratic Institute's (NDI) studies on public attitudes in Georgia are included.

This research is a single case study of Georgia; however, it attempts to offer a comparative perspective. As the hypotheses and research questions aim firstly to illustrate how the level of the European identity varies over time. Second, how has the so-called Big Bang, development of the ENP and Eastern Partnership, etc. affected Georgia's European identity construction processes and the increase of the challenging, populist discourse? Hence, the quantitative data which measures the perceptions of the EU and NATO in the population and how it varies over time, is a vital complementary addition to mapping out discourses.

CHAPTER 4. PRO-WESTERN FOREIGN POLICY AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

4.1 A Brief History of Georgia-NATO and Georgia-EU relations

Although I chose the year 1999 as the starting point of the empirical analysis, it is important to offer an overview of the background in which this data is embedded. Methodological tools of interdiscursivity and intertextuality imply that no texts can be seen in isolation and independent from each other. Thus, following the poststructuralist approach to research, it is important to outline the evolution of the institutional and legal as well as normative environment, contemporary discourses emerge from.

Georgia experienced several rather rocky years starting immediately after the restoration of its independence (Nodia, 2018). Based on the results of the referendum conducted in March of 1991, Zviad Gamsakhurida on 9th of April of the same year, declared the independence of Georgia restored. Only five months later, in December 1991, he became the subject of a military coup. Democratically elected president Gamsakhurida had to flee the country, while the state council took over the control of the state. Soon afterward, former minister of the foreign affairs of the USSR, Eduard Shevardnadze was invited to hold the post of the head of a country ravaged by civil war, criminal gangs, and total chaos. It is because of these historical developments that Georgia was the last of all the former Soviet Union states to join the United Nations, in July 1992. The first years of Shevardnadze's rule were occupied with stabilizing country and building the key state institutions. In 1995, a new constitution was adopted, which replaced 1921's outdated version and allowed Shevardnadze to restore the post of the president, which was suspended after the coup.

It is not surprising that the European Union and NATO, occupied with developments in the Balkans, Eastern, and Central Europe, had neither the political will nor economic capability or interests to engage with one more region overrun by ethnic conflicts. Consequently, desperate for stability, the Georgian political elite was forced to compromise and in 1993 join the Commonwealth of Independent States and accept Russian peace-keeping forces in the conflict zones.

The main objective of the EU in the first years after the USSR ended its existence was to maintain the peace and stable borders between the former members of the Soviet Union. Brussels implemented TACIS (Technical Assistance to the Community of Independent States), which aimed to help newly independent states in implementing reforms. It became the main tool of cooperation between the EU and the states of the South Caucasus (Lussac, 2012, p. 168). In 1992, the European Council started to negotiate the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. The aim was to develop a framework for political dialogue between the sides,

support the development of market economies and democracy (ibid). It was finally signed in 1996 and ratified in 1999. President of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze remarked in connection with the signature of the document:

> Our wise ancestors always had been looking for the ways to get closer to Europe and, today, it can be said, that their thoughts are gaining some shapes – the first specific step towards the integration with Europe has been made (Shevardnadze, 1996).

He described the European Union as "an example of civilized integration" which paved the way for the rest of the world. In reality, though, there is a considerable mismatch between the interpretations the Georgian political elite and the EU officials made of the document. The text of the agreement lists as its objectives:

– to provide an appropriate framework for the political dialogue between the Parties allowing the development of political relations;
– to support Georgia's efforts to consolidate its democracy and to develop its economy and to complete the transition into a market economy;
– to promote trade and investment and harmonious economic relations between the Parties and so to foster their sustainable economic development;
– to provide a basis for legislative, economic, social, financial, civil scientific, technological and cultural cooperation (Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, 1999).

In short, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement provided the legal and institutional framework for the partnership, but it left open the question of whether the South Caucasus was in or out of Europe. In the first decade, assistance from the European Union was mostly technical and humanitarian. Only after the Rose Revolution in Georgia, which was followed by similar developments in Ukraine the next year, officials in Brussels faced a need to redefine policies towards the region. Furthermore, in 2004, 10 countries joined the European Union, thus bringing Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus into the immediate neighbourhood of the organization. As Müller (2013, p. 65) puts it, from being considered no more than a footnote in the EU's foreign policy until the early 2000s, Georgia made a big leap towards formal integration with the European Union.

On the bases of the PCA, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was launched with the aim of creating a "circle of friends" around the EU. Although it was initiated in 2004, the South Caucasus was only included two years later. The main goal of the ENP was to share the benefits of EU enlargement and avoid the emergence of new dividing lines. The European Union and Georgia adopted the Action Plan and the National Indicative program, which provided the ENP with a specific agenda and the ways to monitor its implementation (Müller, 2013).

In the literature on the EU's foreign policy, the ENP is described as promoting "institutional identity," which stands in contrast to the "symbolic" European identity promoted within the member states (Karolewski, 2012). Unlike the common currency, common anthem or holidays it implies transferring the conception of normal and superiority into the neighbourhood.

> European institutions, procedures, norms, and values become new rules of conduct for non-member states: their internal institutions, as well as policies, are judged by the EU's norms. Thus, by adopting these norms, third countries also assume the institutional identity of the EU (ibid, p. 14).

Despite this, there is a lack of clear membership perspective, which makes the conditionality strategies of the EU weaker in relation to the ENP countries. The institutional identity transfer is not supported by an actual identity offer. What some scholars have noted is that the ENP mostly failed to achieve its main objective of promoting democracy and security in the countries concerned (Nilsson & Silander, 2016), and the issue of inclusion/exclusion lies at the core of these developments.

The Georgian-Russian military conflict in August 2008 called for deeper engagement of the European Union in the region as two countries in its immediate neighbourhood entered into a full-blown war. After the cease-fire agreement was achieved with the mediation of France (president of the EU at the time), the European Union sent a monitoring mission, which to this day patrols along the administrative border and observes the situation on the ground. On the basis of the ENP, the Eastern Partnership (EaP) was launched, which is specifically focused on the six states on the EU's Eastern Border (Moldova, Belarus, Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia). But the latter shared the same ambiguity and divergence between Brussels and the Eastern neighbours about what to expect from the partnership and what the end goal of this cooperation is (Korosteleva, 2011, Nielsen & Vilson, 2014, Paul, 2015). The key breakthrough in the relationship between the two (The EU and Georgia) was the signature of the DCFTA and Association Agreement in 2014 and the granting of visa-free travel to Schengen countries to Georgian citizens in 2017. As written on the European Union External Action Service's website, the objectives of the agreements are to strengthen the political association and economic integration.

> They entail significant reforms that aim to bring the Partner Countries closer to the EU by aligning their legislation and standards to the EU ones. Most importantly, they have the objective of improving the lives of citizens in a tangible way (EEAS, n.d.).

2017 is the final year for the empirical data used in my analysis as I consider the signature of the Association Agreement and visa-free travel as important milestones for Georgia's Euro-Atlantic foreign policy. However, despite the AA recognizing Georgia as an Eastern European state, it "represents no

guarantee that the EU will ever open its door to Georgia" (Paul, 2015, p. 5). Below is the table (figure 6) which illustrates the evolution of EU-Georgia relations and some key dates. The evolution and fluctuations of identity discourses and its constitutive relationship with the foreign policy should be perceived in the context of those key points in the timeline.

April 1999	Georgia Joins Council of Europe
July 1999	PCA with the EU enters into force
November 2006	ENP Action Plan for Georgia approved
August 2008	France negotiated ceasefire between Russia and Georgia EU deployed monitoring mission along the administrative border
April 2007	Black Sea Synergy
May 2009	Eastern Partnership launched
June 2014	Association Agreement and DCFTA signed
March 2017	Visa-free regime with the EU for Georgian citizens was launched

Figure 5. Georgia-EU relations timeline

The discourse analysis of the liberal narrative, which I will be presenting in this chapter, is a detailed examination of how the agenda of reforms included in those various agreements with the European Union is constructed as particular tool for externally driven transformation and self-colonization. Usually examples from everyday language help to better and more easily illustrate the points I want to make. In 2017, while giving an interview to TV Pirveli, a local TV channel in Tbilisi, comedian Giorgi Janelidze made the following remark, which, in my opinion, nicely sums up the key argument I am advancing in this empirical chapter.

> How is it here with us, that in order for something to be done, you have to be told from above. He/she has to be told from above as well, and for them it has to be put in the Association Agreement with Europe (Janelidze, 2017).

This joke shows the perception of DCFTA, AA and visa-free travel with the European Union. They are not simply tools in the process of economic developments or security, but instead guidelines for "normalcy", for transformation for the better and for becoming more "civilized" i.e. more European. The aim of this empirical chapter is to examine these discursive constructions and follow

the evolution of articulation through the years 1999–2017. This grand narrative on foreign policy, which I call the dominant discourse on whether Georgia belongs to Europe or Asia, can be viewed as an overarching discourse binding several themes together. An analysis of the empirics revealed that the broader discourse on liminality takes three directions. I have labeled them in my research as following: a) discourse on transformation, b) Geographical discourse i.e. the bridge between Asia and Europe and lastly[6] c) civilizational discourse with a heavy emphasis on orthodox Christianity. These three elements are united with one common characteristic i.e. despite having different dimensions, all of them carry orientalist and stigmatization aspects. Whether the discourse concerns Georgia's geographical belonging, reforms or Orthodox Christianity, self-colonization and construction of its own Orient are present as a background theme in all of those narratives. The discourse analysis of the texts selected for this chapter reveals that Russia is articulated as an eastern constitutive Other vis-à-vis Georgia and later is projected as oriental but still not as oriental as Russia. I must also note here that the study of empirical data revealed that this image of Other is not limited to contemporary Russia. This articulation also involves a temporal dimension. It is expanded to the Soviet Union and the Russian Empire in some instances. Furthermore, in liberal narratives, by expanding logics of equivalence and difference, former-Soviet states in the region, especially those, less eager to engage with political projects coming from the West, are constructed as less "civilized" and "modern" hence, less European. Constituting its own orient and transferring the East to the borders with Armenia and Azerbaijan is how the national identity/foreign policy constitutive relationship deals with its own insecurity on the East/West nexus. To provide an example of what I consider as the construction of temporal and spatial construction of the own Orient, I would like to quote president Mikhail Saakashvili's remarks while speaking with students about reforms in the education sphere.

> In recent years I have travelled a lot in the republics of the former Soviet Union. … I have practically been in every one of them … and visited universities in all of them … and I want to say, despite having been very critical of our own education system … it is like night and day what Georgia has achieved in the sphere of education in last years. … It is still the Soviet Union in those countries. When you enter … from the very first step, as you step into the universities, in the former USSR countries, I go back to the Soviet Union of my youth. … You can feel the smell of the Soviet Union in those rotten buildings. The Soviet Union smells very bad, we do not want it anymore, we should air it, and in the last few years we have been airing this smell from our buildings to get rid of the rotten Soviet smell from the Georgian university system… ("Saakashvili: Soviet Union…", 2013).

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[6] Geographical location is understood as discursively constructed. In other words, how. despite having no actual physical border with the EU member states, the perception of belonging, of being part of that community is discursively reproduced.

Georgia as "modern" and "developed" is constructed in contrast to other former-Soviet states (except the Baltics) as more European and western. Meanwhile, corruption, outdated study methods, etc. are projected as Russian and the Soviet way of doing things. It is articulated as the legacy of the Communist past, which needs to be "corrected." In stigma theory terms, meaning attributed to the policies aimed at reforms in post-Soviet Georgia is "normalcy." In addition, this image of the Self is further reinforced and made stronger by constructing the spectrum of orientalism in the region. It serves the purpose of constituting oneself as not yet fully European such as Latvia or Estonia, but still more European than Armenia, Azerbaijan or Kazakhstan. To quote Georgian politician, Ivliane Khaindrava (2015, p. 51) "in this non-region of the world, Georgia is a European island in the South Caucasus." To put it differently, what makes liberal discourse on national identity self-colonizing is its projection and construction of the West. Furthermore, the fact that it is externally driven i.e. by the incentives embedded in the Eastern Partnership or the Association Agreement with the European Union.

Kuus (2004, p. 479) suggests that in order to understand the relationship between the western and Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries during the EU's enlargement to the east, one needs to go beyond the simple Self/Other dichotomy and examine the gradation processes and the othering of Russia by the CEE states themselves.

> The orientalist assumptions about East-Central Europe persist not simply because they are imposed on the accession countries but also because they are actively used by these countries against their particular Easts.

She further argues that by constructing and projecting themselves as the most eastern outpost of Europe, Central and Eastern European countries are able to escape their own East. What I argue in this empirical chapter is that similar developments can be observed in Georgia. As it has been fifteen years since the so-called "Big Bang" when the CEE countries joined the European Union, the term Eastern Europe has been extended to include not only Ukraine and Moldova but also the countries of the South Caucasus. Thus, I believe it is important to research how the social construction of identity constitutes foreign policy, and how certain foreign policy moves are made possible in the region through this nesting orientalism. Studying external policies through this theoretical prism helps to see perspectives which traditional schools of IR focused on the balance of power or region-building are omitting. As an example of the advantage that following a theoretical approach offers, I want to briefly touch upon the difference between the CEE and the EaP countries. Although one could argue that the Eastern Partnership (EaP) represents the extension of the EU's region-building role, according to Makarychev (2018, p. 4)

> The EU did not invest much effort in extending its previous success stories of regionalism further eastward and did not think of projecting its experience of creating regional political spaces onto its European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).

In other words, unlike the Central and Eastern European Countries, in the case of the South Caucasus, Brussels was not able to play the role of region builder. Makarychev offers two possible explanations: either the European Union initially tried to avoid irritating Russia, or Brussels preferred to engage with individual countries, rather than invest in region-making (ibid, p. 5). However, there is yet another, and indeed more important, aspect to why normative power of the European Union in the common neighborhood is weakening and the former cannot act as the region-builder. Namely, the lack of a shared identity between Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia. There are no common foreign policy goals all the countries aspire to. Sometimes even civilizational narratives are at odds with each other within the region. For instance, president Aliyev's declaration in Autumn of 2019 that they were building the state based on traditional values and therefore there was no place for Azerbaijan in the European Union. "Where do we integrate into the society of those who say, 'Stop Islam?' Where to integrate into the society of those who do not see the difference between men and women? I do not want to go deep. We will by no means integrate there" ("'Azerbaijan is a traditional country…'", 2019).

The theoretical framework I apply in my thesis goes beyond causality in the positivist understanding and argues for the constitutive relationship between foreign policy and identity. If we examine the South Caucasus through this lens, we can see this relationship in action. Different foreign policy trajectories of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia are constituted by different civilizational discourses and the other way around. Whether or not, for instance, the officials in Baku are willing to implement the reform agenda coming from Brussels and sign the Association Agreement, is largely embedded in identity articulations. Azerbaijan is an especially interesting case, as it hosted the European Games in 2015, as well as the Islamic Solidarity Games in 2017, illustrating the fluidity of liminal identity and how different actors can act upon this positioning.

Due to the limited scope of this thesis and in order to avoid superficial analysis, I am not studying the South Caucasus as a whole, but only the case of Georgia. This empirical chapter is divided into six subchapters, each developing the separate trajectory along which the pro-Western foreign policy/national identity relationship takes place. But, at the same time, all six are united by the one grand narrative of the East vs. the West, uncivilized vs. civilized, where the Soviet Union and Russia, as its legal successor, are designated the role of the constitutive Other, while Georgia's Self is in the process of "returning back to Europe" through self-colonization and normalcy, through "re-discovering" Europe in its own culture and "correcting" the stigma of being European, yet not European enough.

4.2 Discourse on Transformation

The theoretical argument I put forward in this thesis argues that the states in the neighbourhood of the EU, or in between Russia and the European Union, which have not been historically subjects of colonization by European powers, voluntarily engage in the strategies of othering and orientalization of Russia and recognizing the superiority of the West. The process of ascribing oneself second-class status is traumatizing as it implies recognition of one's own "backwardness" due to some historical circumstances. Furthermore, it is traumatizing as it involves self-colonization i.e. accepting that one's own culture is still in need of "development" and has some "catching up with the West" to do. This process involves stigmatization, which Zarakol defines not only as a label imposed from the outside but also as "the internalization of a particular normative standard that defines one's own attributes as discreditable (2011, p. 4). Stigmatized actors engage with the strategies of either correcting or rejecting the stigma. Annual addresses to the parliament of President Shevardnadze, between the years 1999–2003, are an example of such strategies.

"The substitution of one type of governance for another is mostly finished. Independently, the democratic state was built" (Shevardnadze, 1999) claimed the head of the state in his address to the legislative branch of the government, while speaking about independence from the USSR.

He repeated the same message, and even expanded a bit more on it in 2001, by saying that

> Georgia, as of now, is n established sovereign, democratic, social and just state … We went through the demolition of the old, totalitarian system and the first stage of building a new, democratic state, which took longer in historical terms, than it seemed it would from the beginning… (Shevardnadze, 2001).

As I have elaborated in the introduction of this chapter, Europe and the West in general are the reference points and driving factors behind the discourse on transformation. By framing itself as the most eastern outpost of Europe, Georgian pro-Western foreign policy reinforces its own Europeanness and makes up for what the years, if not centuries, "lost" under the Russian Empire or the Soviet rule. 1999 is a turning point in this regard, as Georgia became the first country in the Caucasus to join the Council of Europe (CE) and was therefore able to build on actual empirical progress to support its claims. The President, in his address to the parliament from that year stated:

> With the membership of the Council of Europe ends the key stage in Georgia's acceptance into the European family as a full member. This is the great victory of our people (Shevardnadze, 1999).

But it is not simply the discourse on "returning back home," but also on transforming oneself and becoming "normal" and "civilized," in contrast to the Soviet

past. It is an externally driven process imbedded in the Eastern Partnership, ENP or bilateral agreements which existed between the sides before.

> As the Council of Europe requires, the whole package of laws was adopted, which deals with the perfection of human rights … the legislative base was created for managing processes of migration and emigration (ibid).

Or as the year 2000's address illustrates, the membership in the Council of Europe is not just the confirmation of Georgia's European identity, but it is also about reforms and transformation, with the recognition of Western superiority, as the background.

> The success over the last five years in the building of democracy, in the sphere of political civilization and culture, and the protection of human rights, was so impressive that we were accepted in the Council of Europe (Shevardnadze, 2000).

It has been articulated not only as a simple fact that Georgia's belonging to Europe has been recognized and confirmed, but as assessing and praising the country's transformation. How the membership of the Council of Europe is framed and projected to the broader audience, illustrates how the self-colonization discourse is unfolding. Integration into the Euro-Atlantic institutions is a step-by-step process with the transformation of society, as the final point of destination. To paraphrase Kiknadze (2015, p. 93), the late prime-minister Zurab Zhvania's famous sentence "I am Georgian, therefore I am European," should be interpreted not as a simple statement of the fact, but as a program. However, it does not imply that one who is of Georgian origin is European, but rather, that one can become European, through the transformation. This is precisely where the gradation and multiplicity of the Eastern Europe step is a useful theoretical phenomenon, which needs to be taken into consideration. Constituting oneself as less European vis-à-vis Western Europe, but still more European in comparison to Russia or Azerbaijan. Hence, Georgia qualifies more for the membership than the countries on its eastern border. Such discourses require the recognition of Western superiority and the acceptance of condescending and patronizing attitudes coming from the Brussels, as well as transmitting them farther to its own East. It implies articulation of the Self as simultaneously inferior and equal to other European countries.

One important aspect, which became apparent during the discourse analysis, is that although NATO and the European Union differ in many ways, for the discourse on transformation these two organizations are allocated equal importance. For instance, in 2000's address, president Shevardnadze characterized the year 1999 in regard to relations with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization as fruitful, since Georgia joined the peacekeeping mission in Kosovo and achieved the status of an associate member in the North Atlantic Assembly. This was

described by the head of state as "one more important step on the road to full integration into the European structures" (Shevardnadze, 2000).

In other words, NATO, despite covering countries, which are geographically beyond Europe, is still articulated as a European structure. One important aspect which should be kept in mind while analyzing the data from the early 2000s is the level of the EU's and NATO's engagement with the region. In this time period, countries of Central and Eastern Europe were in the middle of the accession process, and therefore the South Caucasus was outside the focus of these organizations. This was a period when the whole Neighbourhood Policy was in the early stages of conception and the relationship with the former Soviet states with the exception of the Baltics, was largely based on individual partnership agreements. Hence, examining this discourse is especially interesting as it illustrates another dimension of Europeanisation, which involves constructing the idea of the West as the image of a "perfect" society, to aspire to, with no specific tools or practical program. It is based on a broader, abstract discourse, reproducing the image of the superiority of the West. Therefore, when in his 2001 address to the parliament, president Shevardnadze lists "building of a sovereign just state, forming civil society, and creating a socially-oriented market-based economy" as strategic vectors of the country's development, one can easily spot the difference from the discourse of the later period, as they are more abstract and less imbedded in the European integration narrative.

Again, this is projected in more general terms, which clearly stand out in contrast to post-Rose Revolution discourse. Although such vectors are projected in abstract terms, it still carries strong self-orientalization connotations. As the president claimed in the same address in 2001,

> current difficulties are caused not by democracy itself, but by not enough democratic development, not enough culture, and the fragility and weakness of democratic institutions, which is often followed by unlimited populism and unlimited demagogy.

Such discourse illustrates voluntarily assigning second-class status to oneself, as well as "discovering" its own Europe within itself through what this thesis labels as self-colonization. In this same address, president Eduard Shevardnadze spoke of Georgian national identity in a very interesting manner:

> I think it is unrelated to those never-ending discussions on Georgia's pro-Western or pro-Russian orientation. If it means the nature of the state, then we have a democratic orientation, as democracy is not an achievement of one country or group of countries, it is a value of humankind and to establish this ideal, our small nation, within its capabilities, but worthily, contributed with a word and pen as well as with blood and sacrifice.
>
> But if under orientation it is meant as the coordination between the systems of state stability and security, then the keys to our policies are the principles of pragmatism and thoughtfulness: we cooperate with everybody who would help us to strengthen the state's independence, would actually do it and in reality

would recognize Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity for real, as our friends are doing (Shevardnadze, 2001).

Although at first sight, this might seem a very balanced and more multi-vectored approach to the foreign policy agenda, already in the early 2000s, national identity discourse had a Euro-centric dimension, by universalizing the West and constructing a civilized/barbaric dichotomy, with Georgia being in the middle, in the liminal stage of transition. "The main vector of our foreign policy is directed towards the European Union. Europe should be the country's final harbor. It is a long and most difficult road…" (ibid).

For the study of transformative discourse, it is important to examine president Shevardnadze's 2002 annual address to the parliament, as he presented his program of future reforms and development for the country, titled "New Project for Georgia." The aim of the project, according to the head of state was to "finally establish a free, independent, and happy – Georgian democratic country, to establish its deserved position on the world stage" (Shevardnadze, 2002).

Stemming from the title, it is logical to expect that the discourse around this project even more consistently engages with the discourse on transformation. It articulates around the idea of being in transition, in the liminal stage, which covers all the social and political fields.

> It remains unchanged, in the direction of the transition stage: the legislative, social, building of the national state, perfection of the president's institution, assessment of the executive government, government, ministries, their cooperation with the legislative government; … formation of the civil society, final establishment of a market economy, domestic and foreign politics, social policies … The concept of deepening reforms implies not only working on a future economic and political development program and its adaptation to the new realities, but extremely deep and radical changes in the content of the state-political course, also, what might painful, but are brave steps in every aspect of state life (ibid).

Analysis of the early 2000s political elite's discourse and its comparison with the post-Rose Revolution narrative revealed an interesting perspective to look at the evolution of the national identity as being in a permanent stage of transition. President Shevardnadze claims that

> For the first time in Georgian history, Georgia is (or has) a new, independent, democratic, sovereign, just and socially oriented sate; A new constitution, according to the achievements of the world constitutionalism, was created; For the first time ever, a real presidential republic was formed; The first time the government was divided into three branches; For the first t time, a new, truly democratic parliament was established (ibid).

Although these reforms and the creation of basic state institutions from scratch, according to this narrative, were important in order to join the UN or OSCE, the membership of Euro-Atlantic institutions carries a more normative agenda and requires transformation which goes beyond simple institutional reforms. To provide a specific example from the 2002 address:

> Since independence, Georgia's key vector of foreign policy became membership in the European and world structures. Georgia had already joined the UN and OSCE as a member 1992. It was more difficult joining structures with strict ideologies, like the Council of Europe and the World Trade Organization. This required substantial internal transformation from Georgia (Shevardnadze, 2002).

In the beginning of the new millennium i.e. in the year 2000, "Georgia and the World: A Vision and Strategy for the Future for Georgia" was published by the government of Georgia. Discourse analysis of this particular document is important to gain an even more detailed picture of foreign policy's mutually reproductive relationship with identity discourse, as well as how the role of the country is constructed in the broader civilizational discourse. The opening passage of the document states:

> Georgia is at a unique and critically important moment in its long history. Georgia has not only regained its independence; it has also set out on a path of transformation of the features of its society. The people of Georgia have chosen unambiguously to join the community of nations that are governed demo-cratically, that value the rights of the individual under the rule of law ("Georgia and the World", 2000, p. 1).

It clearly outlines the transformative, self-colonizing agenda, which is then tied to foreign policy and international relations of the state.

> Georgia's goal is to integrate into all of the major institutions of the European and Euro-Atlantic communities… as the only way to achieve the ambitious goals, they set themselves as a nation. At the same time, Georgia intends to sustain its rich and unique cultural identity (ibid, pp. 4–5).

This document even further expands on "correcting the stigma" and Europe's role in such transformation.

> On April 27, 1999, Georgia became the 41st member of the Council of Europe. Georgia regards its accession to the Council of Europe as a unique opportunity to advance European values and norms in the political, legal, cultural and social realms. Georgia adheres to the standards of the Council of Europe, which provide for the establishment of a democratic state and according to western norms. Georgia has also voluntarily become one of 10 states that have accepted monitoring arrangements through which the Council of Europe works with the government to stamp out corruption.

> With assistance from the Council of Europe, Georgia has undertaken widespread reforms of its judicial system. The Law on Courts of Common Jurisdiction and the Law on the Supreme Court were adopted and, a new judiciary system has been established. In 1997, an institution of the Public Defender of Georgia was established. Capital punishment has been abolished and a new criminal code and code of procedure have been adopted (ibid, p. 8).

There are two interesting passages in these paragraphs, which are of particular importance for my research. Firstly, the idea of the membership as an opportunity to advance European values and norms and taking them as standards to aspire to and to transform oneself. To put it in the theoretical framework of this thesis, membership is perceived as the tool of correcting the stigma, of becoming fully European via self-colonization. This part is even more strongly reproduced by the second part of this extract, which talks about voluntarily accepting the monitoring arrangements, hence giving the organization superiority and ascribing oneself second-class status in relations to former. Examples from the judicial reforms in the country, which were carried out "with the assistance from the Council of Europe" listed in the document, is what this thesis identifies as a self-colonizing strategy of liminars to "correct" the stigma of not being European enough and achieve the closure of the transformation processes.

In a similar manner, part of the strategy which touched upon the military and security issues, describes reforms in the sphere as following:

> Georgia has embarked on an ambitious national effort to establish a democratic society based on the rule of law, separation of state powers, respect for individual rights, and a market economy. A central objective of Georgian foreign and security policy is also Georgia's progressive integration into European and Euro-Atlantic political, economic, and security structures. For these reasons, reform and restructuring of the Georgian armed forces are taking place along Western lines (ibid, p. 18).

Looking at the evolution of foreign policy discourse from a distance, one can claim that the post-Rose Revolution period brought an increase of the narrative of "returning back to Europe" and transformation. Such change is the product of the change of the government as much as it is the result of the developments within the EU and NATO. The revolution took place on 23rd November 2003, in the period of the so-called "Big Bang" of the European Union, that is, its enlargement to the East. Consequently, the Georgian political elite's discourse on transformation, on building a new, modern state, became heavily embedded in Europeanisation. The appearance of the European Union closer to the horizon has drastically affected the intensity of pro-European national identity discourse, as well as, how less abstract and more practical such narratives became.

Such a strong emphasis on the country's pro-Western foreign policy was even more strongly articulated around the idea of the rapid transformation of society and building a new, modern Georgian state. The change of national

anthem, coat of arms and flag, immediately after the revolutions, should be viewed in this context. Previous state symbols, despite being the legacy of the First Republic of Georgia (1918–1921), have been projected as something associated with the rule of Shevardnadze, who himself was an embodiment of the Soviet Union (serving as the head of the Georgian SSR, and the foreign minister of the USSR). Hence, in the process of constructing an image of the new, modern and developed Georgian state, "starting from the scratch" was necessary.

President Saakashvili, the main political figure behind the Rose Revolution and the president of Georgia from January 2004, in his first annual address to the parliament, focused on domestic reforms, the transformation of society and such fundamental changes, to "correct" the stigma of not being European enough.

> Today, I and my friends are happy that we were given a second chance for re-forms. … Right now, we have a unique chance: there is a reformatory president, reformatory government and reformatory parliament, and we can fully change Georgia for the better. … Our future is membership of the European Union and full membership of all the European and Euro-Atlantic institutions, which are important to us. This is no fantasy anymore. In June, there is a chance that the European Union will recognize Georgia as a member of the European Union's immediate neighbourhood. This means that Georgia is becoming the main landmark of the EU's enlargement, and later, maybe, through Georgia, other countries of the South Caucasus (Saakashvili, 2004).

This passage is of particular importance, since, in addition to transformation discourse vis-à-vis the European Union, it provides instances of discourse on foreign policy orientalizing the neighbourhood and constructing its own "East." This extract from the speech also illustrates the role of the eastern enlargement in the identity discourses of societies in the South Caucasus.

Taking this point even further, the newspaper "Akhali Taoba" in 2004 published a statement made by the president of Georgia, while visiting the United States. He once again outlined how foreign policy is not only about certain practical goals, but rather carries transformative connotations and constructs a certain gradation of Eastern Europe vis-à-vis Western Europe.

> In Russia, they know very well, that Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Romania managed to escape their trap and became normal countries, this will happen in the case of Georgia as well (Saakashvili, 2004b).

While delivering the speech at John Hopkins University in the States, the leader of Georgia reinforced the image of the Rose Revolution as a transformative event and the importance of identity as a reference point.

> The second lesson from "the Rose Revolution" is that Georgians are full members of Europe and the European family. When I say this, I mean national identity and not the geographical location. In November, the population united in

defense of the principles of liberal democracy. … The revolution was not protests caused by low salaries, limited electricity, or because of the lack of security guarantees of the state. … People made the revolution happen due to their wish to live in a free and democratic society (Saakashvili, 2004c).

This narrative of presenting the Rose Revolution as the ground zero for building a new, modern and European state, is further reinforced in president Saakashvili's 20005 address to the parliament. The opening of the speech declares:

About one year has passed since Georgia made a choice for freedom, and Georgian people designed a difficult and ambitious path for returning their lost and stolen motherland. … For the first time in modern history, Georgia became a real state (Saakashvili, 2005).

This discourse on transformation is applicable to all the public and state institutions and how there are perceived in post-Revolution Georgia. It articulates the all-encompassing idea of the change, which should touch every sphere of social life.

I am really excited for our Parliament. This is the first legislative organ, where an absolute record has been achieved – members of parliament have not beaten each other up. This is a real achievement of democracy. … This is a new type of politics (ibid).

This passage also serves as a good example of an orientalization discourse being applied voluntarily by the countries concerned. Fist-fighting between the members of parliament is presented as something oriental and uncivilized, and the eradication of which was an example of Georgia on a civilizing mission.

In 2005, the National Security Concept of Georgia was published. This is an important text to be examined as it outlines the narrative constructed by the political elite which came into power through the Rose Revolution. Furthermore, it helps to see how foreign policy discourse has evolved over time, and what the main nodal points around which it is articulated and (re)produced are. The comparative perspective within the narrative of one single country reveals not simply the domestic dimension, but the effects and the role the EU and NATO enlargement as well as foreign policy tools designed by these organizations, has on national identity discourses of so-called countries in-between. Those are the states which are in the common neighbourhood of Russia and the European Union.

The 2005 National Security Concept devotes a whole separate subchapter to NATO and the European Union. It starts by emphasizing the point that Georgia has always been part of Europe, either historically, geographically or culturally.

Georgia, as a Black Sea and South-Eastern European state, has historically been a geographic, political and cultural part of Europe. Therefore, integration into European and Euro-Atlantic political, economic and security systems is the firm

will of Georgian people. Georgia welcomes NATO and EU enlargement and believes that integration of the Black Sea states into NATO and the EU will significantly reinforce the security of the Black Sea region as the South-Eastern border of Europe. Integration to NATO and the EU represents a top priority of Georgian foreign and security policy (p. 7).

There is an important point in this passage, which clearly illustrates the way discourse is constructed, and in post-positivist terms, how certain foreign policy moves are made possible through the language. Georgia, despite certain geographical controversies and vagueness, is articulated as a South-Eastern European state and this is given as historic truth, an uncontested fact, or in Foucauldian terms – as the "regime of truth."

The 2005 document presents very good empirical examples of the arguments I made in the theoretical discussions of this thesis. To be more precise, foreign policy instruments designed in Brussels for addressing the challenges arising in the common neighbourhood, are differently interpreted by these countries themselves. Discourse analysis revealed that political elites in the states concerned adopt the reform agenda coming from the West, however, they are embedded and reproduced in self-colonizing and nesting orientalist discourse. The framing of the annual actual plans within the ENP in this strategy document represents a sound example of such an articulation.

Georgia attributes great importance to the elaboration and successful implementation of the action plan within the ENP in order to exploit fully all opportunities offered by the EU. After achieving tangible progress in socio-economic, institutional, legal and political spheres, Georgia intends to develop a format ensuring a higher level of integration with the EU until full membership becomes possible. Legal and institutional reforms are underway in Georgia according to EU standards. … The assistance of the EU to Georgia through various projects under the Technical Assistance to the CIS (TACIS) program and EU Rule of Law Mission to Georgia (EUJUST THEMIS) has been instrumental in fostering Georgia's reforms in a variety of spheres (National Security Concepts, 2005, p. 8).

As in this thesis I follow a poststructuralist understanding of identity and put forward the argument that the existence of a constitutive Other is vital for the Self, I needed to devote special attention to how the USSR/Russia was constructed as such the Other in these texts. The passage in the National Security Concept which addresses the relationship with the Russian Federation illustrates this point.

Georgia aspires to build cooperation with Russia upon the principles of good neighborly relations, equality, and mutual respect. Georgia would welcome the transition of Russia into a stable democratic state with a functioning market economy and respect for European values. Democratization and foreign policy predictability of the Russian Federation would positively influence Georgia's and the regional security environment (ibid, p. 10).

The wording and the language in which the attitudes towards the state of democracy in Russia are framed represents the creation of the Orient on its borders. By constructing the northern neighbour as being less democratic and still in need of a stable, functioning market economy, Russia is articulated as the East with which issues regarding her foreign policy predictability would remain and thus, negatively affect the security environment in the South Caucasus. Furthermore, one could interpret this passage as representing what, in this thesis, I have described as nesting Orientalism, by projecting a certain hierarchy of transition, where Georgia is less democratic than the West, but is more advanced on the road of transition than Russia.

Another important document, which was produced by the post-Rose Revolution government and falls under the analysis of this thesis is the Foreign Policy Strategy of Georgia for 2006–2009, published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The document engages into what this research labels transformation discourse by articulating the events of autumn 2003 as the starting point, or the ground zero for new, modern and therefore European Georgia.

> After the Rose Revolution, Georgia embarked on a comprehensive reform process aimed at establishing democratic governance and the rule of law, securing sustainable economic growth and restoring territorial integrity peacefully – in sum, turning Georgia into a European State with strong institutions, fully integrated into European and Euro-Atlantic structures (Foreign Policy Strategy 2006 – 2009, 2005, p. 3).

This narrative, which is present in this passage and runs as the background theme throughout the whole foreign policy discourse relies on the East/West dichotomy where the latter is attributed all the characteristics of a liberal-democracy: rule of law and democratic governance, as well as economic sustainability or peaceful resolution of territorial disputes. Georgia is projected as something in-between, in the process of transition i.e. in the liminal stage with reforms meant to help and finish the process of becoming. The West, which includes both the European Union and NATO is constructed as a role model for voluntary transformation, for becoming "a stronger state that meets European standards" (ibid).

In this time period, the 2008 August War between Georgia and the Russian Federation, which has dramatically changed the geopolitical picture in the region, occurred. An open military confrontation between the two countries, recognition of two breakaway territories as independent states by the Kremlin and subsequent establishment of a large military presence in these entities, postponed Georgia's NATO membership perspective for an indefinite future. What should be noted, is that one could observe a certain chain of events unfolding on the world stage for a couple of months before the war, which could logically be linked to the escalation of the situation in the Caucasus. To be more exact, I have in mind the recognition of Kosovo's independence by the USA and most of the European states in opposition to Russia as well as the

refusal to grant NATO Membership Action Plans to Georgia and Ukraine in 2008. In such circumstances, when Georgia's future with the Euro-Atlantic institutions came under question, the dominant discourse on national identity faced the need to intensify the pro-European identity reproduction processes, or in discourse theory terms, expand the chains of equivalence and differences further into the field of discursivity and attempt to fix more signifiers.

After the Russian-Georgian war, 25th of February, the day of the Soviet invasion of the Republic of Georgia in 1921, was officially declared as occupation day. Every year public lectures, discussions and other events were to be organized around this day. On the other hand, the 2008 war coupled with the world financial crisis, has caused serious social and economic problems for the country. As a result, the political elite's discourse, along with its foreign policy, is dominated by socio-economic issues. Despite this, President Saakashvili's 2009 annual address to the parliament also contained elements of what I have labeled in this thesis as a transformation narrative. While speaking about the country's foreign policy trajectories, Russia is articulated as a threat not to just the Georgian state or the region in general, but to the whole "civilized world."

The Kremlin is portrayed as a country which "threatens all the freedom-loving nations in its neighbourhood" (Saakashvili, 2009). Georgia, along with Moldova, Ukraine, and the Eastern European countries is projected as the part of the civilized world, despite their differences, while Russia is the Other. "An enemy, which rules the country by dictatorship and is cooperating with the sources of international terrorism" (ibid). NATO and the European Union are presented as an alternative to the world "ruled by dictatorship."

How the transformative discourse constructs Georgia as on the way to becoming more "civilized" and thus more European and Western, is visible in president's the address from the next year. That is, in 2010 while talking about the street manifestations organized by the opposition, and the fact that it did not turn into violent clashes, Saakashvili said the following:

> with this [meaning peaceful end of the protests] our people have demonstrated a whole new level of political culture, which was not common for the Caucasian political culture before. … Has not the time come, for our politics to be more civilized? … If we try, we can for sure turn our politics into civilized, European politics (Saakashvili, 2010).

One could clearly observe self-colonial connotations and the role of the European identity as a reference point for something civilized, the normal way of doing politics in contrast to the "Caucasian political culture". As a result of such discourse, foreign policy agenda is reproducing as the transformation, as change for becoming better, more civilized, which means more European. Our choice is to build a European, civilized, modernized, democratic Georgia. Our foreign policy course is the return to the European family… (ibid).

In other words, European means civilized, democratic, modern, etc. while the Soviet past and Russia as the successor of it, is backward, barbaric and

Other to Georgia's Self. In the same address, president Saakashvili referred to jokes which are common in Georgian society regarding the possibilities of cheap travel to Russia during the USSR and framed it in a modern and civilized West/uncivilized, barbaric East dichotomy. It was achieved by claiming that although there were cheap plane tickets to Russia during Soviet times, some cities had no proper water systems, or that only 30% of the population had access to natural gas at home. "It is much better, to pay the market price for the flight to Moscow and arrive there as free Europeans, than to fly cheaply, and be treated like vassals from the periphery…" (ibid).

As was already mentioned, the discourse on transformation penetrates all fields of social life. In 2010, the Georgian government launched a program called "Teach & Learn with Georgia." The project brings foreigners into the country to assist English language teachers in public schools. In his 2011 address to the parliament, president Saakashvili touched upon this issue and framed it in the narrative of catching up with the West and leaving behind the Soviet legacy. He drew a parallel with the 19th-century intellectuals introducing European education to Georgia and argued that educational reforms are meant:

> to transform Georgia from a post-Soviet country into a European, democratic state; … modernization means the reforms carried out and to be carried out by the state, which leads to a more civilized, more progressive, more democratic country (Saakashvili, 2011).

In a similar manner to education reforms, changes in the healthcare system are articulated in the same manner by being presented as modern and civilized which is equated with being European and Western at the same time.

"In Georgia, modern, European healthcare is being built" (Saakashvili, 2012), said the president in his annual address to the parliament in 2012.

The Presidential address of this year contains one of the most prominent examples of the creation of its own East and constitution of the European Self through orientalizing Georgia's neighbours.

> The Georgian nation's historical choice is the West, but our region is the Caucasus, and therefore we should not forget Georgia's long-term security without Caucasian security…. Georgia is the window to Europe for the Caucasian nations (ibid).

In other words, the spectrum or pockets of Orient are present as the Self is constructed as less civilized than the West, but on the other hand more Western than its neighbours.

The Office of the State Minister for Euro-Atlantic Integration of Georgia, which was founded in 2004 and existed until being integrated into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, held annual European Days. Events organized within the frame-work included public lectures, meetings with school or university students, etc.

Below (Fig. 6) is a screenshot taken from the official Facebook page of the ministry. The picture "evolution" is described as the winner of the competition "My European Choice" in the Tbilisi Academy of Arts in 2014. A discursive reading of this image perfectly captures the self-colonization narrative vis-à-vis the West. After all, "images and visual artefacts tell us something about the world and, … about how we see the world" (Bleiker, 2018, p. 2). Images not only capture, but also communicate to others some key aspects of human existence. This specific image from May 2014 not only depicts the way one particular artist sees the European Union but is illustrative of the dominant narrative and how it penetrates all aspects of public life. The fact that this submission was the winner of the competition and not just one of the many, underlines that this is the 'offspring' of 'the regime of truth' constructed by the hegemonic discourse. It represents an example of ***popular international imaginaries*** which Salter (2002, p. 14) describes as the popular beliefs about the world outside the state. "The nature of that 'outside' – the international society, and the place of the state in that society." This depiction of the European Union as the last point of this "journey" of human evolution not only reproduces well established civilized/uncivilized, modern/barbaric etc. dichotomies. It also engages with self-colonization i.e. voluntarily assigning second-class status to oneself and articulation of integration into the Euro-Atlantic institutions as the way to transform oneself, "correcting" the stigma of not being European, western, or civilized and making up for what had been lost as a result of the Soviet occupation. Postcolonial scholars argue that the concept of 'civilization' has been used by dominant groups as a standard, "that determines the boundary of a particular, often European, community" (Salter, 2002, p. 18). This is precisely what this picture illustrates, and even more, as it is not so much the projection coming from the West, but rather voluntary internalization expressed in popular international imaginaries.

Figure 6. The winner of the competition "My European Way" from the official Facebook page of the Office of the State Minister of Georgia and Euro-Atlantic Integration

Elaborating on this image, one could also draw parallels with discourses taking place in Central and Eastern Europe as the European Union enlarged to the East. In 2005 magazine "Veidas" in Lithuania was published with a title page "a long way to Europe", depicting three types of a Lithuanian man: Homo Sovieticus, Homo Lituanus and Homo Europaeus (Vonderau, 2007, p. 225). It is presented as an evolution, as stages of becoming. This image makes a clear distinction between "Homo Lituanus" and "Homo Europaeus." The former is not portrayed simply as something positioned between the two but is depicted as backward. It is not only an Orientalist gaze coming from the West, but self-Orientalization. "Homo Lituanus" in such a depiction is liminal, in the stage of transition, which is completed by joining the European Union. After approximately ten years, this dimension has shifted further to the east. Comparison of these two images represents a good example of the similarities between the Central and Eastern European states and the South Caucasus. It illustrates the fluidity and ambiguity of Europe's eastern border.

Those pictures of evolution directly echo president Margvelashvili's 2014 and 2015 state of the nation addresses to the parliament, as the overarching theme for both of the speeches was "from post-Soviet country – to European state" (Margvelashvili, 2014, 2015). He argued that the aim of the government was building a modern state with a human being at its centre. Modern European Georgia, in the centre of which stands a human as "the successor of great culture, modern Georgian, and therefore – European citizen" (Margvelashvili, 2015).

Very soon after the Association Agreement was signed, the Parliament of Georgia together with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and EU started a brief campaign called "Europe is progress! Georgia is Europe!" which included several video clips with Georgians from different sections of society, speaking about how the European standard requirements in the AA helps the transformation of the country for the better. For instance, one of the half minutes videos on education argues:

> Universities in Georgia were founded by European thinking scientists. The Association Agreement gives us the opportunity to get even closer to European standards of higher education and go back to the European educational space ("Education", 2015).

In other words, what can we read from this passage are two basic themes: firstly, it is about change and transformation. The need to adopt European standards, as "Europe is progress." And second, it also has the aspect of going back, returning back home, not just progressing. If "Georgia is Europe" that means that catching up to European standards is not simply a matter of improvement, but most of all, it is about coming back to its true Self, making up for what had been lost during the Soviet occupation. A similar logic is developed in other videos, which concern environmental protection, agriculture, etc.

In his first address to the parliament as the president of Georgia, Giorgi Margvelashvili declared that one of the challenges facing Georgian society was the transfer of European value systems to the contemporary Georgian state.

> A Georgian by his/her individual consciousness is European, is an organic part of western civilization by his/her nature. But, unfortunately, up to this day, we have not been given the opportunity to create a Georgian state based on this individuality and of transferring Georgian traditions to the state context and state institutions (Margvelashvili, 2014).

This is a clear example of how the articulation of transformation as the nodal point takes shape. Georgian state institutions are represented as not civilized and evolved enough yet. They are in need of transfer from Georgian traditions i.e. individual consciousness of being European.

4.3 The Bridge Between Europe and Asia

Geographically, the South Caucasus is located at the crossroads between Europe and Asia. Some geographical texts place Georgia in Europe and draw the border between the two continents along the border of Armenia and Iran. According to another version, the dividing line between the two runs somewhere in the middle of Georgia, splitting the country in two. While the most widely established approach, follows the Ural mountain range and, continues down to the Caucasus, leaving most of the South Caucasus in Asia. As of writing this thesis, the United Nations puts Georgia in Western Asia despite being a member of the Council of Europe. Although geographically the country's positioning is vague and ambiguous, culturally there is less doubt on whether Georgia belongs to Europe or Asia.

> Georgian culture has its geographic roots in Asia, yet it has never been Asian/ Eastern as such. The greatest achievements in Georgian culture – and this concerns solely oral and written literature – are all built upon European values (Kiknadze, 2015, p. 78).

Georgia is one of the oldest Christian countries in the world, with independent Christian kingdoms existing on its territory for almost two millennia. According to Gigineishvili (2015, p. 100), Georgians viewed the Christian world, with the centre in Constantinople as the most progressive and civilized. All the major cultural and intellectual events in Georgia took place "against the background and in light of the processes in the Christian world" (ibid).

This very brief summary provides the context which illustrates that this in-betweenness goes beyond and is not limited to the positioning between the European Union and the Russian Federation. It is part of the larger civilizational narrative and along with discourse on transformation, this image of being located at the crossroad makes certain (especially economic) policies possible.

In other words, placing oneself in Asia and in Europe simultaneously, allows the discourse to accommodate large infrastructural projects aimed at connecting the two continents and big economic benefits coming with them. As my thesis follows a poststructuralist research design, it sets as its goal to examine how certain policy moves are made possible through discourse constructed around this nodal point – the bridge between Europe and Asia.

By the 1990s the foundation had already been laid for projects transporting Caspian oil to Turkey through Georgia. Despite the geographical location of Armenia offering a shorter route, political disagreements and military conflict with Armenia's neighbours excluded that option. The Baku-Supsa pipeline, Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, etc. were the outcome of cooperation between the political elites of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey. What is important about this for my research, is to explore the national identity discourse and foreign policy interconnection in relation to this nodal point.

"Georgia and the World: A Vision and Strategy for the Future of Georgia" opens by describing Georgia as a country that has "productive land and a strategic location astride the crossroads between Europe and Asia (2000, p. 2). The strategy document, while focusing on the identity of in-betweenness constructs the following narrative:

> …geographic location provides numerous sources of opportunities. Lying astride the crossroads between Europe and Asia, and between the Christian and Moslem worlds, Georgia has always served as a vital link-physically, economically, and intellectually-between East and West. With global trade blossoming and new markets and resources opening in Central Asia, Georgia can become a key factor in the growing exchange of goods, people, and information between East and West and North and South (ibid, p. 3).

An emphasis on being the connection point of Asia and Europe is especially important for this narrative, as it adds a political dimension to the discursive frame.

> As part of South Caucasus and the bridge connecting East and West, Georgia pays a great deal of attention to the development of close relations with the Central Asian states. The main goal of co-operation with the countries of Asia and the Pacific Rim is to promote and provide the free flow and exchange of goods, labor force and information between East and West by means of the Trans-Atlantic Corridor (ibid, p. 12).

As an example of these grand projects, which are framed in such discourse, one could look at the new silk road. The idea, which has been circulating in Georgian discourse for many years now and has its roots in the history of the South Caucasus being located on the route of the historic silk road from Europe to China. Internalizing these discourses has become constitutive of the Self. This image is strongly imbedded in national identity discourse and is strongly present despite the increased engagement of the European Union with the

region and the signature of Association Agreement or DCFTA. Examining the presence of this nodal point in post-Rose Revolution Georgia reveals how this takes shape.

To be more precise, the Rose Revolution and the subsequent wave of drastic reforms aimed at building a modern and effective state was accompanied by the euphoria of Europeanisation. Furthermore, within the same time period, the European Union enlarged and entered the post-Soviet space; launched the Neighborhood Policy and other initiatives to engage with the countries in the immediate neighbourhood. Although this was the case, a discourse analysis of texts produced in post-Rose Revolution Georgia reveals that the perception of the European Union is strongly interlinked with the image of the bridge between the civilizations, and a projection of itself as the most Eastern outpost the Western world. "In this new formation, Georgia is not just a corridor, or only a transit country. Much higher is its prospective role as an economic and financial center connecting the West and East, North and South" (Saakashvili, 2007) claimed the president in his annual address to the parliament. Or, as was articulated in his 2008 address: "secure borders should serve as bridges, not barriers. Bridges to the north, the south, the east, and west" (Saakashvili, 2008).

Examining this particular line of narrative in other texts, with the help of intertextual and interdiscursive readings, it is possible to see a broader picture of how it complements the "regime of truth." To be more precise, the Foreign Policy Strategy published for the years 2006–2009 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, frames the geographical location of in-betweenness in the Euro-Atlantic foreign policy discourse in the following manner: "The Diplomatic Service will work to stimulate Euro-Atlantic interest and involvement in developing alternative energy projects and new routes for energy transportation" (Foreign Policy Strategy 2006 – 2009, 2005, p. 15).

This passage is important, as it outlines the specific way the discourse under examination frames the geographical location of in-betweenness as the justification for NATO and European Union membership. In other words, by arguing that Georgia has a strategic location at the meeting point between Asia and Europe, the political elite reinforces its argument for the need for its security to be provided by the Euro-Atlantic institutions.

4.4 Civilizational Discourse

The Discourse analysis of empirical data revealed a third dimension, which this liberal discourse on national identity articulates. I have labeled the following as civilizational discourse and I will argue that it is very different from the other two I have discussed so far. While the articulation outlined in the first sub-chapter was about transformation and normalcy i.e. becoming European and the second subchapter demonstrated how the in-betweenness constitutes large infrastructural projects, this subchapter focuses on how Georgia's Self as

belonging to the European civilization is constructed. This narrative is not about transformation and "correction" vis-à-vis the west, but about being the west.

One of the key contributions I aim to accomplish with my thesis is to examine how the chain of equivalence constructing Georgian national identity expands into the field of discursivity, and subsequently produces foreign policy. The discourse analysis conducted in this thesis reveals that Orthodox Christianity is what discourse theory refers to as an empty signifier and competing discourses on national identity struggle to invest meaning in it and construct discourse around it. This articulation is precisely what I call the civilizational narrative and argue that it represents one of the cornerstones of a pro-Western foreign policy narrative. Orthodox Christianity is interpreted by the political elite in Georgia as proof of the country's belonging to European civilization. If we regard orthodox Christianity as an empty signifier, it implies that there is a competition over attributing meaning to it. Furthermore, as this particular branch of Christianity is in many aspects different from Catholicism and Protestantism which are so widely spread across Europe, it provides a foundation for anti-western discourse. The latter is one instance of what I call populist and examine in the second empirical chapter of this thesis. In this chapter, on the other hand, I examine how the dominant discourse is structured around the empty signifier of orthodox Christianity.

"Georgia and the World: A Vision and Strategy for the Future for Georgia" (2000, p. 2) devotes a rather large part to the discussion of the importance of Christianity for its identity and positioning on the East/West nexus.

> The adoption of Christianity as a state religion at the beginning of the 4th century A.D. accelerated the cultural development of Georgia, and strengthened its affiliation with the Western, Christian world.

The strategy document engages in a discussion of the country's history and its relationship with the Christian world.

> Political vicissitudes that started in Georgia in the 13th century brought frequent challenges from outside aggressors. These hindered the economic and cultural development of Georgia, and eventually, the nation faced the threat of disappearance. Georgian monarchs sought help from Western European countries and the Pope, but they were unable to assist … Georgia sought to re-establish social, economic, and political links with the Christian world. As part of this effort, Georgia eventually established close relations with Russia (ibid, p. 3).

In other words, orthodox Christian Russia was seen historically, as the best alternative to the surrounding Muslim realms. But the partnership did not live up to expectations, as he Georgian Kingdoms were soon annexed by the Russian empire, and later on, by the USSR. Therefore, contemporary Georgian identity discourse translated into foreign policy trajectories engages with the othering of Russia due to these historical experiences and constructs a chain of equivalence about what it means to be Georgian and European in opposition to

Russian/Soviet experience. The whole narrative of orthodox brother Russians, protecting Georgia from Muslim invaders, predominant in the 19th and 20th century, was to be updated and substituted with the former taking the place of the constitutive Other.

The way the narrative is built, offers a good example of how a very specific foreign policy or security agenda is embedded and legitimized through the civilizational discourse. It is constructed as a given fact, as something natural, a "regime of truth," thinking outside of which, is irrational, treason, etc.

> The highest priority of Georgian foreign policy is to achieve full integration into European political, economic, and security structures, thus fulfilling the historical aspiration of the Georgian nation to participate fully in the European community (ibid, p. 6).

In 2002, under the presidency of Eduard Shevardnadze, the constitutional agreement between the Georgian Orthodox Church and the state was signed. The document, which is still valid, regulates the relationship between the two, issues of funding, property, etc. However, the content of the document is not as important for my research as the discourse in which the agreement is embedded. To put it differently, even though this agreement deals with a particular problem i.e. the relationship between the two institutions, a discourse analysis of the document reveals how it is articulated as part of the greater civilizational discourse, of the idea of "returning back home."

"Georgia has restored its historical place in the civilized world as a democratic and independent state" ("Constitutional Agreement…," 2002), claims the opening passage of the document.

A closer reading of the text reveals it as a good case of the chain of equivalence constructed around orthodox Christianity as a nodal point. "Orthodox Christianity, one of Europe's traditional faiths, historically was the state religion in Georgia, which formed Georgia's centuries-old culture, national worldview and values" (ibid).

From this perspective, orthodox Christianity is constructed as something which naturally belongs to the European civilization, it is one of the "traditional faiths" of Europe and therefore, Georgia as a historically orthodox Christian country qualifies as belonging to this world.

Examining the empirical data revealed an interesting trend of how the discourse is evolving over time and how the intensity and extent of the discourse responds to domestic political developments.

A genealogical analysis of the civilizational discourse during Saakashvili's presidency, shows the emergence, development, and intensity of othering Russia over time. To put it differently, despite Saakashvili being notorious for his radically hard line on Russia, this narrative had been slowly emerging and developing during his two terms as the head of the state. For instance, his very first official visit after being elected in 2004, was to Moscow. While in his annual address to the parliament from the same year, he declared:

> For us our relationship with Russia is very important is and vital, what we have achieved is that we should not pose the questions: either America or Russia, either Europe or America. We want everything that is good for us. We want America, Russia, Europe, and the Middle East, if it serves Georgian interests. … Artificially annoying Russia was the previous government's approach to compensate for internal weaknesses through aggressive rhetoric towards Russia. It ended very badly for us, and for our relations with Russia (Saakashvili, 2004).

However, in contrast to such statements, from the very beginning of his presidency, he made it quite clear the future for the country that he envisioned. His inaugural ceremony with lots of symbolism and references to the European Union hinted at the direction, which official identity/foreign policy narratives would take under his rule. In the speech delivered during the ceremony, he claimed that

> We are not only old Europeans, but we are also the very first Europeans, and therefore Georgia holds a special place in European civilization. … Georgia will be a stable ally for all friendly states. Georgia should be formed as a state assuming international responsibility, as a dignified member of the international community, as a state, which regardless of the highly complicated geopolitical situation and location, has equally benign relations with all its neighbours, and at the same time does not forget to take its own place in the European family, in European civilization, the place which was lost several centuries ago. As an ancient Christian state, we should take this place again (Saakashvili, 2004d).

This way of constructing civilizational discourse gains its momentum in the early years after the-Rose Revolution as the political elite launched extensive state modernization reforms and "returning back home" or "back to Europe," were serving as the cornerstones for the discursive framework to make such social transformations possible. Even though this might sound similar to the transformation narrative introduced in the first subchapter, there is one key characteristic which makes these two different and hence, the subject of separate analyses. While the discourse on transformation focuses on the idea of "becoming," of "colonizing oneself" vis-à-vis the superior West, the latter, examined in this subchapter, develops around the idea that Georgia is part of European civilization and it is all about "returning back home." However, these two are not heterogeneous, separate and isolated narratives, but are complementing and overlapping with each other.

As I have already mentioned, the 2004 inauguration ceremony was loaded with symbols. In addition to the Georgian flag, in front of the parliament building, president Saakashvili raised the flag of the European Union as well as playing the Ode to Joy.

> Today, we have not raised the European flag by accident – this flag is a Georgian flag as well, as far as it embodies our civilization, our culture, the essence of our history and perspective, and the vision of our future (ibid) claimed the president.

Such a narrative of "returning back to Europe," implies that there is someone or some historical event, injustice, etc. responsible for cutting off the historic roots. In the case of Georgian official discourse, this role is attributed to the Russian empire, the USSR and to the Russian Federation as a successor of the two. In his 2005 address to the parliament, such a portrayal and Russia and Georgia's juxtaposition on the broader West/East nexus is evident.

> We do not deserve interest from others just because the Georgian leader demolished something somewhere [hinting at president Shevardnadze who was serving as a foreign minister of the USSR during the fall of the Berlin Wall] … not because we are in the corridor, … – no, we are an interesting country. … We have to agree on principle. This is Georgia's European orientation; no foreign military bases should be stationed in Georgia. Any other party which will declare that Georgia should not have European orientation, that foreign bases should be in our country and that foreigners should be involved illegally in our country's matters, should be outlawed. In Lithuania, all the parties, which were arguing with each other before, united and won elections. … since the independence of Lithuania was more important to them. … For the sake of independence, we should learn how to work like that. (Saakashvili, 2005).

An interesting aspect in this passage is that the declaration that no foreign troops would be stationed in Georgia and that Georgia's foreign policy goals should be integration in the European Union and NATO might seem contradictory. But if we examine it as a transition, as the process of becoming of the liminal subject, this ambiguity becomes clearer. The term "foreign" is directed against Russian military bases stationed in Georgia at time, and they are projected as leftovers from the Soviet occupation, which was imposed by force on Georgia. Now, as Georgia is embarking on the "journey of becoming" and "returning back home," soldiers of NATO member states are not "foreign troops" and therefore, do not fall under this limitation. This is precisely an example of how foreign policy discourse reproduces the Foucauldian "regime of truth" i.e. it naturalizes or makes it look like something natural and given, the country's belongingness to a certain civilization. Furthermore, it serves the purpose of legitimizing and justifying concrete foreign policy agenda, while making the thinking outside of it irrational and illogical. An instance of such reproduction can be found in the introduction of the National Security Concept (2005, p. 1)

> Georgia, as an integral part of the European political, economic and cultural area, whose fundamental national values are rooted in European values and traditions, aspires to achieve full-fledged integration into Europe's political, economic and security systems. Georgia aspires to return to its European tradition and remain an integral part of Europe.

> Values and objectives shared by the EU are common to Georgia, which considers EU membership an important guarantee for its economic and political development. Georgia's accession to the EU will strengthen Europe by restoring the Black Sea region as a European trade and stability zone (ibid, p. 8).

From the perspective of poststructuralist discourse analysis, texts which fall under the empirics are not understood in a literal sense. Symbols, monuments, events, and institutions fall within the larger definition of material to be studied. Hence, it is important to go beyond the speeches of the president and look at some major developments, which were meant to strengthen and further reproduce the dominant discourse. I am arguing in this study that in the time period of 2003–2008, with the aggressive push for drastic reforms, the need for the constitutive Other became even more acute. The political elite engaged in the process of creating new myths and national heroes, as well as in going back to history, especially to the First Republic of 1918–1921 and constructing the continuity with the contemporary Georgian state. Within this context should be placed the return from France to Georgia in 2005 of the remains of Kakutsa Cholokashvili. He was a military officer during the Democratic Republic of Georgia and in charge of organizing guerrilla warfare against the Reds after the Soviet invasion, before fleeing to France. His reburial ceremony in Tbilisi was attended by hundreds of people, including representatives of the political elite. Furthermore, a new banknote of 200 Georgian Lari, depicting Cholokashvili, was designed. These developments should not be perceived as a simple act of returning home the body of a hero but should be examined from the perspective of making up for what has been lost due to the Soviet Occupation and should be viewed as (re)discovering new national heroes and allegiance to them. This was an instance of reproducing the image of continuity with the past, which is vital for every national identity. Furthermore, it was not just one isolated case, in 2006, discussions started about partial rehabilitation and return of the body of president Gamsakhurdia. He served briefly as the first president of the second republic between 1991–1992, before being brought down by a military coup and forced into an exile. He tried to return and win his post back, but was unsuccessful and had to flee again, resulting in his death in mysterious circumstances in 1993. In 2007, the body of the first president was removed from Chechnya, where it was originally buried and reburied in the pantheon in Tbilisi. This event was an important part of the discourse on othering the Soviet past, as Gamsakhurdia was the leader of the country which declared the restoration of independence from the USSR.

Furthermore, under Saakashvili's presidency, in order to increase the awareness of and support for NATO and EU membership among the population, the Information Center on NATO and the EU was founded. "More NATO in Georgia and more Georgia in NATO," "more Europe in Georgia and more Georgia in Europe," as well as "may NATO be here" mottos were coined and widely promoted. In 2004, the Georgian parliament adopted a bill on broadcasting which took the promotion of Euro-Atlantic foreign policy to a whole new level. It required Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) to devote certain airtime to the popularization of integration into NATO and the European Union. In 2006, the state commission on integration in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization approved the "Public Information Strategy on Georgia's integration into NATO." According to the Office of the State Minister of Georgia

on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, the goal of the strategy was to assist the country's path to join the organization through informing the public about the institution, its structures, objectives, etc. Public mobilization is named by the office as the key to supporting Euro-Atlantic foreign policy.

The civilizational discourse in many ways differs from the transformation narrative I have analyzed in the first subchapter of this chapter. It does not appeal to the idea of Georgia's membership of the Euro-Atlantic institutions through self-colonization or normalcy, but presents it as an uncontested fact, historical justice, which should be restored. For instance, in his parliamentary address in 2007, President Mikhail Saakashvili spoke of his country as "the homeland of the oldest Europeans, which strives to become a full member of the European family" (Saakashvili, 2007). However, for such a narrative to develop, it is important to give it a certain meaning, to interpret the Soviet past in a certain way. In this case it implies engagement with othering the USSR as a stranger to European civilization and therefore to the Georgian Self and establish continuity with the West after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In other words, "inventing traditions" which would make up for the "lost years" and re-establish Georgia's place in Europe. As Saakashvili (ibid) put it "Europe comes to Georgia again, and Georgia becomes familiar with Europe all over again."

An emphasis on restoration is vital for such a narrative as it contributes to the legitimization of a mutually reproducing relationship between identity and foreign policy. It is not about simply becoming familiar but becoming familiar "all over again." What is more important from this line of articulation is that the discourse establishes connection with and to a certain degree refers to what I have described in this thesis as self-colonization and stigmatization. Arguments developed by these theoretical approaches suggest that societies engaged in such tactics are going back into the past and trying to look for historical evidence in order to find justification for their Europeanness.

The year 2007 was politically rather challenging and difficult for Saakashvili's administration. Weeks of peaceful demonstrations organized by the opposition ended in the clashes with the police forces. One of the biggest TV channels, Imedi TV, was raided by law enforcement and shut down. On 8th of November, the president declared a 15-day state of emergency prohibiting all the private TV/Radio stations apart from the public broadcaster from transmitting the news. In order to resolve the political crisis, president Saakashvili resigned and declared snap elections to be held in January 2008. Despite the elections generally being regarded as competitive, the OSCE Observation Mission in their report outlined certain problems connected with vote counting and usage of administrative resources by the ruling party ("Georgia. Extraordinary Presidential…", 2008). Hence, the 54% of votes gained by the incumbent president gave a reason for the opposition to doubt whether his victory in the first round was legitimate. Texts from this time-period have illustrated the intensification of the civilizational narrative and I argue that this interplay between identity/foreign policy also serves domestic

purposes and legitimizes certain governmental actions. It happens through presenting all the major rivals as working for the Kremlin i.e. for the Other while projecting itself as the sole defender and guarantor of pro-Western foreign policy i.e. Georgia's "true" identity. In his inaugural speech, in 2008, for instance, president Saakashvili claimed that "Georgia is forever yoked to Europe" joined by a common and unbreakable bond, which was based on culture, "shared history and identity and a common set of values" (Saakashvili, 2008).

From a poststructuralist understanding, national identity should be viewed as the "regime of truth" manufactured and achieved through the manipulation of discourses by the elite. This is the context from which the fact that 2008's snap presidential elections were accompanied by a referendum, should be analyzed. Along with voting for the president, voters were asked whether they supported NATO membership or not. About 77 percent of voters responded positively to this question, which became one of the cornerstones in the legitimization of foreign policy. Both pro-European and anti-Western texts on foreign policy produced after 2008 intensively refer to the referendum, either for the legitimation of their claims or to call for a new referendum, arguing that situation has changed. Already in his 2008 inaugural speech president Saakashvili described the results of the referendum as people of Georgia demonstrating

> their clear and unequivocal sentiments about Georgia's Euro Atlantic destiny.… We have made these contributions and sacrifices not for short term benefit, but rather, because we share the same values – values that we treasure and that we must help defend. I have heard the voice of the Georgian people when they expressed their overwhelming desire to enter NATO and so too has the community of shared values that makes up this great organization (Saakasvhili, 2008).

A discourse analysis of the Foreign Policy strategy adopted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the years 2006–2009 offers a better illustration on how the enlargement of Euro Atlantic institutions to the East and deeper engagement with the region facilitates the identity discourse/security relationship with the emphasis on "returning back home".

> As a result of recent EU enlargement, European stability and security have become directly linked to those of the Black Sea region and the South Caucasus, which is duly reflected in the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) Strategy Paper (Foreign Policy Strategy 2006 – 2009, 2005, p. 19) states the document.

The civilizational discourse of Georgia being articulated disseminates and penetrates spheres of everyday life, seemingly unrelated to national identity or politics. For instance, during the presidency of Mikhail Saakashvili, as the motto for the touristic promotion of the country, *"Georgia – Europe Started Here"* (Ó Beacháin and Coene, 2014, p. 923) was adopted. Interestingly, this

motto did not last long, and very soon it was replaced with "where east meets west."

In 2014, Georgia, followed by Moldova, signed the Association Agreement (AA) and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) with the European Union, which became a milestone for Georgia's national identity discourse. It was celebrated as an important achievement, as the confirmation of belonging to the west by the West itself. Although the signing of any of these documents does not in any way guarantee or open up membership prospects, the Georgian political elite's celebration of the event left the opposite impression. Soon after the AA was signed, a long-awaited agreement on visa-free travel between Georgia and Schengen countries was reached. I examine these documents in my research, not in terms of the content and agenda, but I focus instead on the processes of how discursive articulations give meaning to these events through the chains of signifiers. Below are two more empirical examples which help to illustrate the arguments made in this study. Figure 7 is a photo of the passport control counter from Tbilisi International Airport. This image, which was widely circulated in social media, reveals the difference or mismatch of expectations between the elites in Brussels and Tbilisi. While for the European Union it is just another policy tool of engagement with its neighbours, the Georgian dominant discourse treats this event as the validation of its belonging to the West.

Figure 7. Passport Control Desk in Tbilisi International Airport

In 2015 as the visa-free agreement with Georgia was approved by the European Union, the government of Georgia aired a video which depicted the town halls and various attractions all around the country illuminated with the colours of the EU flag, while the Ode to Joy played in the background. Prime minister at the time, Irakli Garibashvili, addressed the nation with the following words:

On the road to European Integration Georgia made a step which largely determines our future in the European family … The European Union, in fact, recognized our steady loyalty to European values … Today, we have made it true, the dream of the current and many generations. … Europe is not just a rational choice; it is our historic home. This word – Europe – encompasses everything our people aspire to. This is the freedom of each citizen, rule of law, welfare, this is a strong economy and equality among human beings (Gharibashvili, 2015).

This short passage reveals how new elements (AA, DCFTA and visa-free travel) are given meaning through the expansion of the chain of signifiers. The nodal point of European civilization as the historic home of Georgia explains how it is possible that there is such a mismatch between what these events mean for the two sides. Poststructuralist discourse analysis reveals the mechanisms, practices and linguistic games making the Association Agreement or DCFTA more than just mere tools of engagement with the EU's eastern neighbours.

The three dimensions of articulation which have been analyzed so far can be regarded as general, overarching narratives which guide certain genealogical readings of particular foreign policy moves and texts. In the following subchapters, I will focus on three policy areas and analyze them through this specific discursive constitution of identity. I will illustrate how certain policies and practices are made possible through the specific articulation of identity. These areas are participations in international military missions led by NATO; relationships with other former Soviet states; and addressing the legacy of communism. To explain each of the spheres further, by participation in international military missions, I am examining discourse in which financial, and first of all, cost in human lives such contributions is embedded and justified. The empirical analysis revealed that it refers not only to rational calculations and arguments, that such participation provides training for the Georgian army, closer cooperation, and partnership with NATO or the US, etc. and as a result provides security protection for Georgia itself. But also, such moves are made possible through constructing the discourse on a national identity belonging to the Western world, to the "civilized" world vis-à-vis the "uncivilized" East, where the missions are taking place. I expand this in more detail in subchapter 4.4, while in the next empirical chapter I examine what is an alternative articulation of this issue and how it is juxtaposed to the former. Regarding the second field i.e. relations with other former Soviet states, this is an important dimension to be examined, as it represents examples of how the reproduction of its own East takes place on the practical and popular level. By constructing and framing neighbours and other CIS countries as less European, less modern and developed, and less civilized, Georgia reinforces its own Western identity. This nesting orientalism gives a push to a very particular way of dealing with recent history. Finally, re-evaluation and reinterpretation of the Communist past and the Soviet legacy represents the temporal instance of stigma correction and normalcy. This discursive construction alienates and others the Communist rule and constructs it as the constitutive other. In the

second empirical chapter, I examine populist interpretations of the Soviet legacy and the difference between these interpretations. More specifically, how the different and competing conceptions of national identity define and give meaning to historical events.

To briefly summarize, I have identified three basic narratives liberal discourse articulates around liminal positioning: transformation, the bridge between Asia and Europe and civilizational belonging. The first puts emphasis on Georgia's backwardness and the need to "catch up" with the West through rapid and extensive reforms. In such articulations, agreements and treaties with the European Union are seen not only as tools to access the European market but also as guidelines on how to transform the Self. The discourse on the bridge between two continents reinforces Georgia's Europeaness with the construction of the Self as the most eastern outpost of Europe. However, such positioning also serves the purpose of attracting large infrastructural projects such as a transportation corridor and the delivery of goods from Asia to Europe. The final one emphasizes belonging to European civilization despite the vague future of EU membership. In this mismatch of expectations between the policymakers in Brussels and Tbilisi, the Association Agreement or DCFTA are articulated differently. For the former they are just practical tools for modernization and democratization of the immediate neighborhood, while for the latter they serve as proof of belonging to Europe. In search of justification, the dominant discourse exaggerates these agreements to the point of displaying the poster which says "EU Associated State" to greet foreigners in the airport.

In the following subchapters I will describe concrete policy moves which are constituted by the national identity narratives outlined above. More specifically, what are the implications and how are contributions to military missions or decommunization legislation made possible through foreign policy/national identity discourse.

4.5 Contributions to International Military Missions

Contributions to, and participation in international military missions led by NATO have been on the agenda of the political elite since the mid-1990s. These had several purposes: firstly, they were aimed at modernization and improvement of the quality of the Georgian armed forces; secondly, they helped to increase cooperation with the West; and finally, contribution to the missions strengthened arguments for the country's NATO membership. By sending 1500 soldiers to Afghanistan, Georgia has been the largest net contributor to the ISAF mission. Furthermore, officially Tbilisi sent one of the largest contingents to Iraq and has also been contributing to the European Union's civil military missions on the African continent (Kakachia et al, 2019, p. 6).

In this discourse, NATO is perceived as not just a security alliance, but the guarantor of the Western civilization (O'Hagan, 2007, p. 24). Reference to the Western civilization does not only invoke certain 'set of images,' i.e. liberal

democracy, welfare etc. but it "also provides us with a way of drawing boundaries, establishing differences, and demarcating political and social spaces" (Herborth and Hellmann, 2017, p. 3). In a similar manner Mälksoo (2010, pp. 123–124) argues that the division between so-called new and old Europe over the war in Iraq is a case of *ritual role reversal* allowing liminal actors' self-empowerment vis-à-vis the traditional Western European 'core.' Their new self-representation becomes that of teachers, of reminders to the members of NATO and the EU of their special duty and responsibilities, rather than that of novices.

Weber (2017, p. 182) draws parallels with the construction of the West during the "Cold War" period. Referring to 'the West' "as the common ground for political action" facilitated the integration of different actors in Western Europe and North America despite their differences. The chain of equivalence linking democracy, freedom, human rights, etc. was constructed around the "Western civilization" and juxtaposed to the "threat" coming from "the East."

> Such chains of equivalence derived their strength and plausibility through the construction of the Soviet Union and its allies as standing for the exact opposite – totalitarianism instead of democracy, repression instead of freedom, and so on. In this sense, securitization of the Soviet Union after World War II and the ensuing relations of enmity were constitutive for the formation of 'the West' as a political project (ibid).

An important element is that this construction does not necessarily have to be antagonistic and threatening. For instance, Georgia's articulation in opposition to its neighbours (Armenia and Azerbaijan) is not antagonistic per se, but the differences are enough for a boundary to be drawn.

In this context, the starting point or in poststructuralist terms, the striking event[7] for the discourse is the "Georgia Train and Equip Program" launched by the US in 2002. As the Second Chechen War consumed the North Caucasus, neighbouring Georgia's mountainous territories were vulnerable to being used as shelter by the Chechen rebels and terrorist groups. The situation reached the stage where reports appeared of Russian military bombing Georgian territories ("Russia Denies Georgia Attack Report", 2002). Officially, Tbilisi faced a difficult choice, to either allow the Russian army to conduct military operations freely in Georgia or to seek help from other countries. A headline from The Guardian from September 2002 claimed, "Putin threatens to invade Georgia" (Traynor, 2002). As the article continues, president Shevardnadze was given a one-month ultimatum by Putin, to deal with the Chechen rebels, and if he failed to do so, Moscow would have moved on with the operation. That is when the Americans appeared on the horizon to rescue (him/Georgia). The Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP) which lasted for 18 months, had a budget of 64 million US dollars and was aimed at training and equipping the Georgian armed

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[7] The moment which has striking character and is the subject of intense political concern (Hansen, 2006, p. 69)

forces, to the extent that they would have been able to handle the regions bordering Chechnya without Russian intervention. In the long run, though, this program laid the foundation for increased cooperation between the US and Georgian armed forces and gave a push to further inclusion of Georgia in missions to Iraq or Afghanistan.

Modernization and building a strong state, which was the key narrative of the post-Rose Revolution government, naturally, incorporated reforms in the army in this broader theme and furthermore, translated it into national identity/ foreign policy discourse. This was already obvious in president Saakashvili's presidential address to the parliament in 2005 when he claimed the following:

> This is very important for bringing together the nation and for national pride … Nobody should ask the question of why we are there [meaning international military missions]. Georgia should be part of these processes since our country has to restore its territorial integrity with peaceful means. … We are a country which, as never before, needs international support and respect, to carry out peaceful processes (Saakashvili, 2005).

Here, it is constructed as having a twofold benefit. In addition to the modernization and training of the armed forces, it is projected as having the aim of reinforcing Georgia's European national identity. For instance, the security strategy published in 2005, very clearly states that the participation in, and contribution to international peace support missions as well as "the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) with NATO and the ongoing Strategic Defence Review are fundamental for the implementation and sustainability of these reforms" (National Security Concept, 2005, p. 6).

To translate it into the context of national identity discourse introduced in the first part of this chapter, the on-going process of NATO integration is important not only as a practical and rational defence move against the military threat coming from Russia, but also it serves the purpose of legitimation and justification for reforms, implementation of which might be politically painful and costly for the ruling elites. Contribution to international peace-keeping missions is important in the East/West discourse, as it aligns Georgia with the "civilized" West and puts the country in their camp vis-à-vis the "less civilized" East. This narrative of "being in the same camp" with the "civilized" West is actively used as an argument for Georgia's prospects of NATO membership. This is achieved through the articulation of the country as being not only a consumer and beneficiary but also as ae contributor to international security and stability itself. This discursive move can already be seen in the late 1990s and a strategy document from the year 2000.

> Georgia seeks to build a stronger relationship with the Alliance [NATO]. Georgia sees participation in such activities as PfP and the EAPC as an essential step toward the realization of its long-term goal of NATO membership. Georgia strongly supports the retention of the transatlantic link as a vital element of security and stability in Europe. Georgia strongly supported the efforts of NATO

and other partner countries to put an end to the violence and mass violation of human rights in South-Eastern Europe. As part of its strong commitment to the international community efforts to restore peace and stability in the Balkans, the Government of Georgia has sent troops to Kosovo in order to contribute to international peacekeeping operations there ("Georgia and the World: A Vision and Strategy for the Future for Georgia", 2000, p. 7).

The National Security Concept for Georgia from 2005 makes it even more explicit:

> By participating in multinational anti-terrorism, peacekeeping, search and rescue, and humanitarian operations, Georgia acquires valuable experience, but more importantly, contributes to Euro-Atlantic security. Georgia, as a member of the international anti-terrorist coalition, contributes to the establishment of peace and stability in different parts of the world. Georgian troops participated in the NATO-led operations in Afghanistan; currently, they are involved in NATO's operations in Kosovo, as well as in the stabilization mission in Iraq (National Security Concept, 2005, p. 6).

Alternatively, as Saakashvili stated in his 2006 presidential address:

> Very soon Georgia will become full and equal with others, as a member of the civilized, democratic world. … Today, I can bravely say what I could not say one year ago – Georgia is one step away from NATO. If everything continues as it is today, … in 2008 [Georgia and Ukraine] can become full members of NATO … Georgian borders will be defended by a couple of thousand Western airplanes, the best armies, and, most importantly, a security alliance of the most democratic values (Saakashvili, 2006).

This part is illustrative in two ways. It offers a classical security dimension i.e. borders being protected by Western airplanes, "the best armies" etc. but at the same time, this narrative brings into the debate a value-based approach and goes beyond rational calculations. It is about joining the "alliance of the most democratic values," to which the country naturally belongs.

In 2010, Saakashvili claimed that "Our course is the protection of human civilizational and democratic values be it either in Iraq or Afghanistan" (Saakashvili, 2010). Therefore, the sacrifice of the lives of soldiers is justified with the representations. To put it differently, these costly and painful policy moves are made possible through the combination of civilizational, transformative and geographical discourse described in the first part of this chapter.

How membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is considered to contribute to something more than just physical security and is seen as the driving force behind the transformation can be observed in this extract from one of the texts under analysis:

The partnership with NATO is contributing to strengthening democratic values, implementation of democratic reforms in the country and establishment of overall stability. These factors are instrumental for the transformation of Georgia into a reliable ally (Foreign Policy Strategy 2006 – 2009, 2005, p. 19)

Analysis of this identity-based discourse on NATO membership and of how specific policy moves are made possible through the constructions of certain representations are analytically useful in two ways. Most importantly though, it helps to explore how national identity can have multiple meanings, by chains of equivalence and difference, which are turned into binaries. In the (next?) part of this thesis, the populist construction of national identity is examined, and comparison is drawn vis-à-vis the dominant discourse. To explain it more in discourse theory terms, the issue of participation in international military missions is just another example of how by linking it to specific signifiers (in this case the civilized world, the West, Europe, etc.) a certain understanding is formed. How the cognitive worldview i.e. the place of the national Self on the East/West nexus is constructed through such practices and what their implications are for liminal entities' ontological insecurity. In the second part of this thesis I illustrate how the linkage of these events with different signifiers produces alternative meaning.

4.6 Relations with Other Post-Soviet States

Representational practices of the Self as Western, for the dominant discourse articulated around the master signifier of Europe, defines the relationship with the neighbours and other post-Soviet states accordingly. One of the very clear examples of such articulation is president Saakashvili's comparison of Georgian universities with other post-Soviet higher education institutions, which is quoted in the introduction of this chapter. The following pages elaborate more on this discourse and trace its emergence and development over time.

At the beginning of the 2000s, Georgia was economically and politically weak and largely dependent on Russia. Hence, the role of the Kremlin in the narrative from this period is of inclusion and exclusion at the same time. The West is projected as the role model for development and the reference point for Georgia's Self, but unlike the post-Rose Revolution articulation, instead of putting the countries of the CIS among the constitutive others, it portrays them as liminal like itself. To provide an example of such articulation, in 2002, at his parliamentary address, president Shevardnadze stated that:

Russia was and will always be one of Georgia's largest trading partners. The Russian factor will mostly be a decisive factor for conditions of the Georgian economy. No less important is the factor that it is impossible to find a nation around the world which religiously, culturally or even linguistically, has so much in common. It is natural, for two centuries Georgia has been part of Russia.

On the other hand, there are a lot of economic, as well as political and cultural perspectives that bind us together with the members of the Commonwealth. Hence, as of now, leaving the Commonwealth of Independent States would not be understandable for the other member states (Shevardnadze, 2002).

These passages are important in two ways. Firstly, it illustrates that although Georgia by 2002 was already a member of the Council of Europe and the political elites' discourse was imbedded in transformation and self-colonization, Russia was still projected as the country of having the closest cultural, linguistic or religious ties with Georgia. Although Euro-Atlantic integration was declared as a foreign policy goal under his presidency, the division between "uncivilized" and "eastern" Russia/post-Soviet versus the developed West is not the cornerstone of identity discourse. Secondly, as is examined below, these extracts, when placed against post-Rose Revolution discourse on Russia, helps to see in a comparative perspective the evolution of the constitutive Other and the role of the external developments.

4.7 Tackling Communist Legacy

As a key argument of discourse theory states, when the hegemonic articulation weakens, organic crisis occurs which itself results in an increased number of floating signifiers or social elements that are open for definition (Doty, 1996, p. 106). In the case of Georgian national identity, the collapse of the Soviet Union was such an organic crisis. With the disappearance of communism as the nodal point, national identities started being articulated around competing nodal points.

This narrative is largely driven by self-colonizing tactics outlined in the theoretical section of this thesis. Traditional meanings of international organizations start to lose their meaning and alternative definitions start to appear. To be more concrete, there are important differences between NATO and the European Union on many levels, not only in terms of geographical area, but aims and mission, structure, etc. Pro-Western discourse on national identity with the very specific articulations of the chains of equivalence and difference manages to overlook these differences and define these two using the same point of reference. Both the EU and NATO are constructed as an alternative to the Soviet Union and post-Soviet legacy, and in order to complete the transition and "correct" the stigma of the communist legacy, membership must be achieved. In 2002, president Shevardnadze while addressing the parliament claimed

Georgia's safety will be fully provided only when the country becomes a member of NATO and the European Union. It is not a coincidence, that all the former members of the Warsaw Pact, as well as the Baltic states, have associated their future with these unions … I think that the time has finally come for Georgia to express its Euro-Atlantic desire. I do not even rule out that after the Prague Summit of NATO, our country will officially declare a wish to join the

> North Atlantic alliance. … (This is) Even more important (in terms of economic as well as security developments) than Georgia's membership of the European Union (Shevardnadze, 2002).

There are several points in this small extract to be analyzed. Firstly, one can clearly see the gradation of the Orient, the transfer of the East. The Baltic States are mentioned as an example of how they managed to associate their future with these unions and the frontier had moved further to the East. Secondly, it is important to understand the practices and specific policies which hint at how "correcting the stigma" is possible through the implementation of a reform' agenda coming from Euro-Atlantic institutions. This is projected as a step-by-step process which involves the transformation of internal legal or political institutions to make them more harmonized with the European ones, and hence, more "civilized," more "normal."

> Georgia's movement towards the European Union, is step-by-step, but continues being goal oriented. The key sign of such a relationship was the signature of the "Partnership and Cooperation Agreement" between the European Union and Georgia and ratification of the document in the parliaments of the member states. … The process of harmonization of Georgian internal legislation with European. …
>
> While the existing conditions of Georgian society as articulated by the head of the state are described as having "old, out-of-date attitudes towards the phenomenon of government, as if it is or should be acting separately from the societal processes. It can be said with full assurance that such an approach is one of the legacies of the totalitarian system (ibid).

The legacy of communist rule is blamed for such backwardness of the society and thus, the articulation takes the self-colonizing direction vis-à-vis the West, in order to tackle these leftovers from the USSR period. In 2011, the Georgian parliament adopted the "Liberty Charter" which represents a good example of transformative discourse in relation to the Soviet past and memory. The main aim of the bill is to limit the employment of people associated with the Soviet secret services in governmental and elective offices as well as eradicating street names, symbols, monuments, etc. representing the totalitarian regime. The opening passage of the legislative piece claims:

> The aim of this law is … effective administration of Georgian legislative norms and strengthening national security, carrying out preventive measures against the promotion of the foundations of totalitarian communist and fascist ideologies, eradication of communist totalitarian and fascist symbols, iconic buildings, statues, monuments, bas-reliefs, inscriptions, names of streets, squares, villages and towns, as well as a ban of propaganda tools carrying totalitarian communist and fascist ideologies (Liberty Charter, 2011).

Such details as the legal definition of propaganda, totalitarian regimes or the actual tools used to enforce the law are not relevant for the scope of this research. Instead, it focuses on the language play accompanying the bill. For instance, according to Radio Liberty, one MP from the ruling party is quoted as saying: "the extent of practical implementation, obviously, will not be big. It is even more difficult since most of the archives have been taken to Russia. Hence, it has greater political and symbolic importance" (Kharadze, 2011).

He described it as the farewell to the Soviet past. It should be seen from this perspective, as an articulatory practice rather than directed against any practical problem to be solved. The same context is what explains the discussion about the name of the country in foreign languages. In 2011 Radio Liberty (Rekhviashvili, 2011) covered the story about the Foreign Ministry of Georgia calling some countries to change the name of the country from Gruzia to Georgia. My aim is not to investigate the real origin of the word Gruzia and whether it has really something to do with the Russian language or not. Instead, what I would like to focus on is why this matter has been raised and why this is an important example of unfolding civilizational discourse. As Georgian kingdoms were annexed by the Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union, the name of the country in some languages has a Russian basis, and instead of Georgia or Sakartvelo, Gruzia became the basis for Georgia in Estonian – Gruusia, in Latvian – Gruzija, in Polish – Gruzja, in Czech – Gruzie and so on. As Nugzar Tsiklauri, MP from the then-ruling United National Movement (UNM) told Radio Liberty:

> In the western world, Georgia is established as "Georgia," while "Gruzia" is spread only in parts of Eastern Europe and is somehow associated with Georgia's life in the Russian empire for 200 years. Precisely, it is from Russia, that the name "Gruzia" for Georgia became widespread in these countries

In other words, what this narrative suggests is that the change of name also means transformation, the transition from the periphery of the former Soviet Union to a "European" state. Changing the name in a foreign language is a performative act of leaving the Soviet/Russian past behind and rejoicing its "true" civilizational identity. Lithuania presents an interesting case, as it replaced "Gruzija" in 2018 with a word deriving not from "Georgia" but instead from "Sakartvelo" i.e. the authentic name in the Georgian language and introduced the term "Sakartvelas".

This is also the context in which one could look at the importance of the museum of the Soviet Occupation, which was founded in 2006, and why it caused so much discussion. It should be regarded as part of othering the Communist past and constructing the Self in this juxtaposition. While studying the Soviet legacy in Georgia, it is impossible to avoid the contested meaning of Stalin. As he was Georgian, he is an important part of public discourse in Georgia. For analytical purposes, I treat Stalin as a signifier which lost its traditional meaning after the organic crisis i.e. the collapse of the Soviet Union

and contestation between populist and liberal conceptions of national identity over its new meaning take place. The latter defines him as a bloodthirsty tyrant and serial killer and hence calls to remove his monuments, museum, streets, and avenues named after him, etc. In contrast, for the populist discourse on national identity which focuses on the religious (orthodox Christian) and ethnic parameters of what it means to be Georgian, Stalin is articulated as a symbol of national pride. He is juxtaposed with liberal Europe and represented as the defender of so-called traditional values. I discuss this matter in a separate subchapter in the second empirical chapter dedicated to the populist narrative, as his image is more important to those actors who engage in counter-stigmatization, than to the political elite which opts for normalcy and stigma correction.

More examples of contested meanings between the parallel constructions of national identity can be found while examining the discourse on certain holidays or commemoration days. More specifically the celebrations of Christmas and Victory Day. The Georgian Orthodox Church follows the Julian calendar, according to which Christmas coincides with 7th of January in the Gregorian calendar, which is officially used by the state. The Gregorian calendar is used by the Catholic Church as well as by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, while the Russian Orthodox Church retains the Julian calendar. As the articulation of national identity relies on symbols, which day Christmas is celebrated, illustrates whether Georgia is European or not. Philosopher and one of the rectors of Ilia State University, Gigi Tevzadze, for instance, in a public Facebook post compared the celebration of Christmas on 7th of January to paying homage to the occupants i.e. Russians. ("Celebrating Christmas in Georgia …," 2016). Occasionally this discussion resurfaces in public and the celebration date for Christmas becomes a matter of discussion about civilizational belonging. In a similar manner, and more related to the Soviet past is the discussion on celebrating Victory Day on 8th of May instead of 9th. In 2011 foreign minister of Georgia at the time, Grigol Vashadze proposed that the commemoration of victory over Nazi Germany should take place the day before i.e. on 8th of May ("What is Georgia Celebrating…", 2012). His line of argument followed the logic that that is the date when most of the "civilized" world celebrates, while 9th of May juxtaposes and puts Georgia in line with Russia and other post-Soviet states i.e. "less civilized."

Conclusion

Before proceeding to the second empirical chapter, I would like to briefly summarize some key arguments made in this chapter. The discourse which I examined above is what could be called the dominant conception of national identity. This narrative articulates around three nodal points: transformation or correction of not being European enough; Being located at the crossroad of Europe and Asia, and Georgia as historically part of the European civilization.

These three elements constitute the overarching grand identity narrative which makes certain foreign policy trajectories possible. The constitutive relationship between national identity/foreign policy is visible in various instances of public discourse. I have identified several of those dimensions and examined how the articulation is formed. The dominant discourse on national identity constitutes and gives meaning to participation in military missions, Russia and other post-Soviet states or the Communist legacy.

If we return to the graph on page 25, the key findings of this empirical chapter illustrated the norms of membership articulated by the liberal discourse as inclusive and non-ethnic based. The social purpose is the implementation of European norms and standards implied in the Association Agreement or similar documents on cooperation signed with the Euro-Atlantic institutions. When it comes to the relational construction of the meaning, as the examples illustrate, alienation of Russia, the Soviet past and other post-Soviet states (with the exception of the Baltics) serves the purpose of articulating the Self as part of the West. Furthermore, the subchapter on contributions to the military missions represents an example of a cognitive worldview. This policy has not only practical purposes (training and modernizing the military with the help of NATO or strengthening the membership argument) but also serves the purpose of dealing with the ontological insecurity of the liminal actors. The reproduction of belonging addresses insecurity derived from being in and out at the same time.

The dominant discourse is composed of texts coming from the political elite. In this chapter, I examined how pro-western foreign policy is constituted and constitutes national identity and subsequently fixes the meaning of elements in the field of discursivity. However, as the meaning remains constantly contested and full fixation cannot be achieved, there is an alternative articulation of the Communist legacy or military missions abroad. This contestation is amplified by the liminal positioning of Georgia on the East/West nexus and subsequent ambiguity. In the next empirical I will elaborate on this alternative discursive contraction.

CHAPTER 5. POPULIST DISCOURSE ON NATIONAL IDENTITY[8]

"Nations are new things that refer to old things"
(Timothy Snyder, 2018, p. 112).

According to the poststructuralist reading of social reality, total, full fixation of meanings is impossible. In other words, what it means to be Georgian, European, Christian, a patriot, etc. is open for constant interpretations, struggles and conflicts over its definition between parallel discursive constructions. Discourse or articulation happens around a master signifier, which subsequently expands into the field of discursivity (all the possible meanings that social elements could have) and attempts to define/give meaning to them.

The first part of the empirical chapter of this thesis introduced one of the many possible meanings Georgian national identity takes, and subsequently shows how specific policy moves are made possible through such (re)production processes. Chapter 4 was focused on the articulation of Georgian national identity as European and, as a result, the whole set of institutional-legal frameworks that were thus made possible. This chapter, in turn, focuses on the regime of truth which takes shape as the result of articulation around different Georgian = Orthodox Christian, traditional values, "neither Europe nor Asia." These nodal points guide articulation of what I have called populist discourse on national identity and which constitutes its own policy agenda vis-à-vis the European Union, NATO, international military missions or addressing the communist legacy, and goes against established discourse.

In this part of the thesis, I analyze empirical data collected mostly from newspapers along with party policies and other texts which actively engage in the reproduction of anti-Western texts, consciously or unconsciously spreading misinformation and fake news coming from Russian sources. As I have explained in the theoretical framework section of this thesis, there are two core elements that make these narratives populist: creating a dichotomy of the elites vs. the people (limited to dominant ethnic/religious group within the community) and demand for popular democracy which "had been taken away" by those elites. These attitudes naturally lead to a fascination with conspiracy theories, so-called cultural Marxism, the global plot of liberalism against "traditional values," against orthodox Christianity or nation-states. As populism is not necessarily limited to one specific political or ideological view, any articulation is populist, as long as it meets those two core elements.

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[8] Some parts from this chapter have been published as a separate study Kakabadze, S. (2019). *Poststructuralist Study of "Christian Stalin" in Contemporary Georgian Public Discourse.* In Makarychev & Kruessman (eds) *Europe in the Caucasus, Caucasus in Europe. Perspectives on the Construction of a Region.* European Studies in the Caucasus. Vol. 1. Ibidem.

Populism is a very culture- and context-specific concept. For instance, in Europe it often refers to anti-immigration and xenophobia, whereas in Latin America it hints at economic mismanagement and corruption (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 2). If we regard populism as a skeleton of sort, around which various articulations are constructed, we understand why for instance despite different stands on Russia or LGBTQ issues, both Estonian Conservative People's party (EKRE) and French National Rally (RN) are lumped together as populists. According to Mudde and Kaltwasser it is a *"thin-centered ideology"* containing *"the pure people"* versus *"corrupt elite"* dichotomy, and the call for politics to be the expression of the people's general will. Populism should thus be understood as "a kind of mental map through which individuals analyze and comprehend political reality" rather than any coherent ideological tradition (ibid, p. 6).

The ideational definition of populism is based on the combination of three main elements: a) a Manichean and moral view of the world; b) "the people" as the virtuous community; and c) distrust of "the corrupted elites" (Hawkins & Kaltwasser, 2019, p. 3). In other words, populism is a combination of these three elements and not just anti-establishment rhetoric or solely a depiction of "the people" as a morally superior political body. "This means that populism is a moral discourse that not only exalts popular sovereignty but understands the political field as a cosmic struggle between "the people" and "the elite" (ibid).

This ideational approach to the definition of populism has several advantages. Firstly, it explains why populism is so flexible and easily attached to other ideologies. Secondly, this allows to the accommodation of various types of political actors and organizations under this term. Thirdly, it provides a more comprehensive answer to the question regarding the relationship between populism and democracy, and finally, the ideational conceptualization of populism takes into account both the supply and demand of populist politics. The former refers to the scholarship's focus on style or strategy use by the political elites, whereas the ideational approach on the other hand, "enables us to also look at the populist demand, i.e., the support for populist ideas at the mass level" (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 20).

What makes Georgian discourse structured around this "skeleton" of populism is very strong opposition to multiculturalism, especially to LGBTQ rights, alongside the promotion of anti-Western sentiments. The latter is the result of the construction of the global liberal elite vs. "the people" dichotomy. "Foreign" and "stranger" values "imposed" by the minority are being juxtaposed against the orthodox Christianity and conservative values adhered by the majority. In this binary opposition, through the chains of equivalence and difference, the European Union is constructed together with the United States as the main driving forces behind the conspiracy, while Europe, in general, is constituted as the victim of "cultural Marxism." This itself leads to a fascination with anti-establishment political groups and European leaders, and also with president Donald Trump due to his appeal to the masses in opposition to elites. These types of politicians and their rhetoric are admired because of their more

isolationist and "taking control back" approach. For parallel constructions of Georgian national identity, they represent an example of and reference to breaking away from "liberal totalitarianism" imposed by the western elites. My purpose is not to investigate whether or how much, in fact, any of those leaders are "men or women of the people." Instead, I focus on the level of discourses and how it resonates through the broader public. What are the main traits that make them populist and how do they differ from inclusive discourse in their conception of what a Georgian is?

In a similar manner a Georgian businessman associated with Russia, Levan Vasadze called for a policy of "selective Westernization." In an interview with American news agency CBN, he said the following:

> We are not saying that we are against the West … I always say I'm a big enthusiast of selective Westernization of Georgia.
> We'll take all the productive, progressive things from you (America, the West in general), but we'll throw out all the garbage, all the nonsense and unfortunately, in this particular case, your current pseudo-moral standards need to stay outside of Georgia if we want to maintain the family institute as it always has been in Georgia (Thomas, 2016).

This is a good example of populist articulation as it implies clear anti-elitist undertone hinting at "pseudo-moral standards" being imposed by the West through the political elite and demand for popular sovereignty (maintaining the family institute in Georgia). However, whether Vasadze or the Alliance of Patriots are indeed supporters of NATO and EU membership or they are simply unable to go against popular opinion in public while slowly spreading Western-sceptic attitudes is not the subject of this study. Furthermore, it is not necessarily ontological anti-elitism, but rather a rhetorical tool aimed at becoming part of the elite. Therefore, what I am examining is how the articulation takes place rather than what the real intentions of the actors are.

Furthermore, there are two important points which I need to mention before proceeding with empirics. Firstly, this populist articulation in many respects both directly repeats and consonantly reproduces narratives offered by far-right parties and groups from Europe. It constructs immigrants as existential threats, repeats fake stories of crimes committed by refugees, etc. while accusing the political establishment of Brussels of unilaterally imposing policies on member states. Secondly, despite sharing similar ambivalence towards Brussels or LGBTQ rights, there are some important differences within populist groups in Georgia. The articulation I am examining differs from Georgian alt-right wing nationalist groups modelled after their European counterparts on matters of foreign policy and interpretation of the Soviet past. While the former stands out for its anti-Kremlin attitudes and glorifies the first Democratic Republic of Georgia, the latter calls for Russia-friendly foreign policy and positively reminisces about the years under Communist rule.

According to Kincha (2017), grouping conservatives and ultra-conservatives together as 'pro-Russia' or 'neo-Nazi' is misleading.

> What most conservative and ultra-conservative groups in Georgia have in common is their dislike for state-supported, top-down liberalism and its successes (e.g. the anti-discrimination law). Beyond that, their actual positions on issues, their alternatives, and their strategies all vary substantially. Even during the 'perfect storm' of the 2017 xenophobic march, some such groups refused to rally.

What he argues is that the reasons why these groups appeal and resonate to the Georgian population could be explained by the legacy of neoliberal economic policies after the Rose Revolution. However, this is not the main focus of this particular research, and the purpose of these introductory paragraphs is to clarify that when I speak of populists, I mean only one particular articulation from amongst the various groups which can be united under the umbrella of populism. One important reason why I decided to look at this particular populist discourse is that they are relatively well established, in comparison to the small alt-right groups. One of the largest newspapers "Asaval-Dasavali" along with "Sakartvelo da Msoflio," "Sakinformi" and many others, very clearly reproduces their narrative. At the same time, one of the proponents of this discourse, the owner of the TV channel "Obiectivi", Irma Inashvili founded a political party, The Alliance of Patriots of Georgia. Although it was founded in 2012, it is the only openly pro-Russian political force (meeting with Russian counterparts in Moscow despite no formal diplomatic relations between the two countries) in recent years that managed to cross the electoral threshold and secure seven seats in the 150-seat parliament tin 2016. In their vision and program, the Alliance describes patriotism as "thinking and pondering, speaking and discussing, acting and behaving in conformity with the national spirit, which in our case is the Georgian spirit" ("Our Vision and Program," n.d.).

The Georgian spirit itself, according to the same text, is a dedication to the homeland, God, love for everything Georgian and native language. Further reading of the text reveals how discursive constructions can distort certain established meanings and provide new interpretations. As an example of this, I want to discuss the concept of tolerance. Vision and Program of the Alliance of Patriots of Georgia claims:

> Georgian values don't comprise envy, hostility, and hatred. Georgian values reject xenophobia. This is why we never hate other nations surrounding us, and this is the reason why Georgia used to be the center of the Caucasus. This is why Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Jews, Chechens, and others used to find shelter in Georgia. We have always been far from any ethnic or religious hatred, … (ibid).

On the other hand, the Alliance is one of the leading actors behind xenophobic protests and demands for stronger immigration policies as well as expressing admiration for the rise of nationalists across Europe or for Donald Trump.

Online media platform Coda which was founded by a team of international journalists and has offices in Tbilisi and New York, published 3 short series in 2017 titled "Clash of Narratives: A Tale of Two Georgias." It juxtaposes two women: leader of the Alliance of Patriots of Georgia Irma Inashvili with the editor in chief of the magazine Tabula, Tamar Chergoleishivli and presented this as the struggle between conservative and liberal narratives. In the first episode, titled "'Freedom' vs. 'Tradition,'" which already shows the binary division this juxtaposing takes, Irma Inashvili says the following: "The contemporary world is throwing away what I call pseudo-liberal values. It got tired, threw it away and it's moving toward something new. And what is this new? In reality, it is a return to the past" ("Clash of Narratives", 2017). She resonates with conservative voters by reproducing the idea that there are certain values being "imposed" by the West, which contradict Georgian traditions or cultures.

> We are open to useful initiatives from Europe, but I will not support same-sex marriage. Because it is unacceptable for my traditions and culture. And for most of my nation, it is unacceptable. Just for the sake of being liked by West? They do not have to like me! (ibid).

This passage shows the line of thinking this discourse tries to develop – strange, alien Europe imposing values that threaten Georgian culture and traditions whatever they may be, while the political elite, in order to gain the support of the former, willingly imports those values. This line of reasoning leads me to qualify this political group and subsequent narrative as populist. After introducing Inashvili, the episode switches to Chergoleishvili driving a BMW, with loud music on full blast, speaking about growing up in a family of anti-Soviets who dreamt of independent Georgia with rock music, freedom of expression, etc. One more interesting aspect is that while Inashvili speaks in Georgian during the interview, her "antagonist" is speaking in English.

In the second episode of the series, Inashvili further elaborates on her stand on the west and shows similarities with the views of European alt-right groups of Europe: "There was a time when the French were proud to be French! … That is not the case anymore. Now everybody is saying I am a European and that is all" ("Clash of Narratives", 2017b…).

The leader of Alliance of Patriots of Georgia did not oppose membership of the European Union, but still, argued that they need to be careful not to lose national identity. While in the third and final episode, her comment on NATO, I think nicely summarizes how Georgian populist discourse constitutes this organization: "I was 21 when I first visited Brussels, and the door was opening to NATO and we had high hopes. But today I am 46 years old NATO is still telling us the door is open, but also gently telling us that it will not accept us" ("Clash of Narratives", 2017c).

Another actor which is part of this large network of interlinked media outlets, NGOs, political parties and research institutions, is the "Institute of Eurasia" (Evraziis Instituti). The organization itself was founded soon after the

2008 Russo-Georgian war and as the name suggests, it advocates Eurasian identity of the Georgian nation and juxtaposes the latter to Euro-Atlantic foreign policy. Representatives of the Institute of Eurasia actively participate in forums and discussions organized by Russian political elites, as well as try to replicate the Russian style of honouring the Soviet legacy and holidays. For instance, the so-called "Immortal Regiment" i.e. celebrating Victory Day with a parade of citizens holding pictures of their ancestors who fought during the war. The Russian leadership tried to export this style of commemoration to the post-Soviet space and the Institute of Eurasia was behind organizing it in Georgia. Although, unlike Armenia and Azerbaijan, such marches never managed to become mainstream in Georgia and this has a lot to do with the contested legacy of communism and liberal discourse discussed in the previous chapter. Activities of the institute also include the screening of the movie about NATO's operations in Yugoslavia in major cities of Georgia and presenting it as American aggression against Serbia, or publications criticizing the west and the Georgian government's foreign policy (see the text from Rtskhiladze, 2014 as an example). The emergence of these institutions cannot be understood without taking into consideration the background context of Russian foreign policy. With Putin's return as a president in 2012, the Kremlin tried to occupy the niche of the defender and guarantor of "traditional values." Russian state media is presenting the EU and Europe as *"Gayropa"* where children are taken away from parents by force and given to same-sex couples, or families are forced to host jihadist Muslim immigrants in their homes (Galeotti, 2019, p. 37). In addition to serving domestic purposes, it opened new opportunities and perspectives for Russian foreign policy (Sharafutdinova, 2014, pp. 615–616). I discuss one such publication, which presents the Ukrainian "Revolution of Dignity" as another instance of a NATO plot against orthodox Christianity later in this chapter.

When it comes to nodal points, the first one is the West in general, which implies the United States, NATO, and the European Union. The Chain of significations constructs these organizations as equals and in opposition to Georgia's true self. Another nodal point around which articulation takes shape is Georgian=orthodox Christian. As the empirical analysis developed in this chapter illustrates religious differences between the Catholic and Protestant Churches are referred to as a way of constituting the ontological Self as different from Western Europe. This opposite positioning is constructed around the common branch of Christianity and shares the Soviet past with neighboring Russia. Unlike the liberal narrative examined in the previous chapter, this articulation does not construct the Soviet past as negative. As the analysis reveals, the Soviet Union and especially Stalin's Georgian background is referred to as a matter of national pride, and some of the texts go as far as to suggest that the current status of Georgia vis-à-vis the west is one of more servitude that it was under the Soviet system. I will provide some concrete examples of this articulation later in this chapter. Due to the analytical

usefulness and importance of this signifier, I discuss the articulations of the Soviet legacy and Orthodox Christianity in separate subchapters.

The last signifier to be noted here is "neither Europe nor Asia." This one directly stems from the liminal positioning and argues for a more "nationalist" foreign policy. It also claims that the participation in NATO or the EU-led military missions and operations goes against the national interests of the country. I discuss this discourse in the final subchapter of this empirical chapter. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of how those discursive articulations of identity reproduce a foreign policy agenda, which calls for neutrality and the halting of Euro-Atlantic integration.

5.1. Georgian = Orthodox Christian

While doing discourse analysis on populist texts, orthodox Christianity re-peatedly appeared as the key nodal point in defining what it means to be Geor-gian. Being Georgian is tantamount to being orthodox Christian. As a result of such a chain of significations, specific foreign or domestic policies are consti-tuted and interpreted through this prism. In the next subchapter (5.2), I demon-strate how the soviet legacy is addressed through this chain of equivalence. Before that, it is important to further elaborate on the formula Georgian equals orthodox Christian and demonstrate how the construction takes place. I call this type of national identity conception an exclusive national identity and I argue that it stands in contrast to the liberal version which I call inclusive. The key difference lies in whether a non-orthodox Christian could be a Georgian (inclusive) or is excluded from the conception of national identity (exclusive).

Before moving any further, there is one important issue which needs to be addressed. Namely, one should be aware of the dangers of interpreting the arguments made in this study as the binary opposition between the orthodox Christian and liberal national identities. As a matter of fact, with the help of discourse theory, I aim to do exactly the opposite. What I label as am exclusive conception of national identity i.e. one cannot be Georgian unless he/she is orthodox Christian, is just one more example of many parallel attempts to achieve partial fixation of meaning. While it is true that discourse theory provides the idea of a transcendental center, "the result is not total chaos and flux, but the playful determination of social meanings and identities within a relational system" with the nodal point playing the role of the anchor (Torfing, 2005, p. 13). Orthodox Christianity here is the empty signifier in relation to which other floating signifiers, including national identity, acquire meanings. What follows is that Christianity for the exclusive national identity discourse should be viewed as an empty signifier, which can be roughly defined as a signifier, which has lost its specific meaning and gained autonomy "in order to become the embodiment of fullness" (Wullweder, 2015, p.81). A very important feature of such a signifier is that it is not simply just another

expression of the chains of equivalence and difference, but it constitutes the system of significations itself.

Research on collective memory and identity among Georgians (Gugushvili et al., 2015) has revealed that while it is very important to speak fluent Georgian or to be born in Georgia to be considered Georgian, the most important thing, according to the participants' responses, is to be orthodox Christian. Approximately 44.2% think of religion as the most important marker of identity, in contrast to 33.4% for language, 23.4% for citizenship or 19.3% for being born in Georgia. This link or, in discourse theory terms, the chain of equivalence, can be widely observed in the contemporary populist discourse. One recent study conducted by the Human Rights Education and Monitoring Centre (Ghvinianidze & Barkaia, 2014) illustrated that among schoolteachers there is a widely held belief that being Georgian and being orthodox Christian are identical, equal concepts. One of the teachers who participated in the study claimed that while a Georgian was fighting for his/her own country, he or she was protecting Christianity. According to another teacher, it is unacceptable for a Georgian to be a Jehovah's Witness. This belief is so deeply embedded in discourses that, for instance, in July 2017, at the opening ceremony of a hotel in the village where the current patriarch of the GOC was born, the Prime Minister was quoted as having said, that the GOC and the Georgian state are "interwoven", and "secularism in its classical sense" is misplaced in Georgia. Also, he claimed that the relationship between the Church and the state currently present in Georgia is a "unique model" ("CSOs: PM Kvirikashvili's Church Statements…", 2017).

As Orthodox Christianity is the nodal point for the articulation of Georgian national identity, populist discourse is reproducing the image of this identity as facing a constant threat from liberalism, globalization or freemasonry. State institutions which work to promote and protect liberal-democratic values are portrayed as allies or agents of this global conspiracy. The Office of the Public Defender (Ombudsmen) of Georgia, which is the key state institution working on human rights, is naturally one of the main targets for attacks coming from these groups.

"Sakartvelo da Msoflio" at the beginning of April 2009 published an opinion piece "Sozar Subari – Archenemy of Orthodox Christianity!" (Muashvili, 2009). Sozar Subari served as Public Defender at the time and hence, was responsible for presenting reports and recommendations on the state of human rights in Georgia. Since reports tend to be critical of the Georgian Orthodox Church's dominant position in society, which they say leads to discrimination against religious or sexual minorities in different ways, they are interpreted by these groups as an attack on national identity. As the opinion piece suggests:

> Some part of society thinks that it will be difficult to maintain the national self in conditions of globalization, but the negative consequences of globalization can be averted if the state correctly approaches the reforms to be implemented. Unfortunately, we encounter rough and subjective intervention of various insti-

tutions and public figures in the spheres, which directly imply maintaining the national self. One such issue is the juridical status of the Orthodox Church in the state (ibid).

This passage is illustrating at least two core points on which this discourse focuses: firstly, the Georgian national Self is being constituted in relation to Orthodox Christianity. Secondly, this Self is constituted vis-à-vis the global conspiracy coming from the West.

Discourse constructed around Orthodox Christianity as master signifier articulates Russia as a part of the Self rather than a constitutive other. This is mostly due to both countries sharing orthodox Christianity and hence, being different from the western Christian religious traditions. For instance, "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" published an interview with the head of NGO "Istoriuli Memkvidreoba" (Historical Legacy), Tariel Gagnidze. While speaking about the importance of restoring friendly relations with Russia he draws a historical parallel with the annexation of Georgian kingdoms by the Russian empire in the 19th century. According to this narrative

> the relationship between Russian and Georgian people was not just the unity of interests, political pragmatism. This fact [Georgians occupying important places in the Russian military and political establishment] reveals that that Georgian aristocracy from the very beginning accepted Russia as their own, Russia also accepted Orthodox Christian Georgia as a brother-in-arms and her own. This is mostly the same even today ("Tariel Gagnidze: …", 2009).

The appeal to orthodox Christianity also serves to link Georgian national identity with the Soviet legacy. For instance, in May 2009, in relation to Victory Day, "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" published a Georgian translation of an opinion piece by the Russian Archimandrite Peter called "The Day which Changed Future in the Present!" (Archimandrite Petre, 2009). This publication deserves the attention of this thesis for many reasons. Firstly, it heavily relies on religious symbols, and paradoxically, puts the Soviets on the side of Orthodox Christianity. "God did not forgive Fascist killings by the torture of millions of people in Eastern Europe. … In order to punish them, God sent legendary submarine Capitan Alexander Marinesko" (ibid).

Soviet force is articulated as serving Christianity and God in opposition to the Nazis who are projected as Satanists. "It was not Marinesko, but God who punished the enemies of mankind and sadists. Today, it is proven that they were Satanists and Masons" (ibid).

The United States or the West is articulated not just as the other, but as a threat to national identity and thus to orthodox Christianity (constitutive of Georgian Self). The Western normative agenda is constructed as deliberately targeting conservative and "traditional" values. Some quotes from the opinion piece published in "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" "Why Orthodox Christianity is the Main Enemy of America" (Saneblidze, 2009) illustrate this point.

Your country, which got rid of communism, became the slave of something worse than communism – a slave of the American Revolution; The revolution, which started in the 60s and turned out to be the biggest mistake. We, the Americans, still try to sell it to the rest of the world.

What should be noted, as the author of text claims, is that these words are by the American journalist Paul Lauer about Russians, but it fits Georgia as well. In this text, Orthodox Christianity is described as "like a bone stuck in the throat of ideologues of "new moral"" (ibid). That is because, as the text argues, those "ideologues" are working on undermining traditional marriages, family values, etc. In contrast to the western understanding of freedom,

> the Church understands freedom as the freedom from sins, evil when no external force can make a human do something which opposes his/her consciousness, his/her ideals, and beliefs… That is why it [the Church] is being attacked.

Finally, the publication ends with the Balkan Wars in the 1990s as an example of such a war against Orthodox Christianity. Furthermore, this difference from Lutheran and Catholic branches of Christianity is often referred to as the main reason why Georgia is a stranger to the west, and hence, alone.

This exclusive conception of national identity also echoes what I discussed in the first subchapter of this empirical chapter. As being Georgian implies being exclusively orthodox Christian and this branch is not so widely spread across Europe, this articulation represents the Georgian nation as alone and as having no relatives around the globe. And hence, the argument continues, the political elite needs to advance national interests first. In 2010, in "Sakartvelo da Msoflio," Mkheidze argued the following:

> Georgian people realized the uselessness of yelling "NATO, NATO," and also realized that we are orphans, a nation without relatives, and that nobody will bother, for one, examples of this have been numerous in our history and therefore, our great sympathy for the west, for the USA, has grown into apathy, and even worse, in most cases, into aggression and in the subconscious of the nation, pro-Russian feelings have grown (Mkheidze, 2010).

And from this logic of an "orphan orthodox nation" in the world, Russia becomes the closest relative Georgia could have. Thus, the shared history with orthodox Russia, be it either in the Russian empire or the Soviet Union, becomes positive rather than a negative experience. In regard to 200 years of Russian occupation, the text claims the following: "While living in one state for two centuries, there could be good and bad, but if we compare good and bad, undoubtedly the good will outweigh it…" (ibid).

And the good, which according to this text outweigh the bad parts of being connected to another state is the protection from "alien, foreign values."

> Whether it is independence or dependence, its benefits are measured according to whether first, the rights of the nation are protected and not so-called human rights, under the mask of which thousands of perversions are cultivated in society
>
> ….
>
> "Let us compare Georgians who found themselves in Fereydan, in Turkey and Georgians who lived in the Russian empire. Who managed to better sustain traditions, language, religion? … I want to illustrate, that living in the Russian empire did almost nothing to Georgian self-identification and the reason for this is first of all our nation's high culture and … common faith [with Russians]. In Stalin's empire, all the people had written their nationality in the passport, which was abolished by this "zapadniks"… (ibid).

This issue of nationality in the passport reoccurs very often in populist discourse. In 1999 following the recommendations of the European institutions, the section indicating ethnicity was removed from Georgian ID cards. From time to time nationalists and western-sceptic groups keep returning to this topic as an example of how Europe is "destroying" the unique Self of Georgia. Some groups go as far as demanding the inclusion of a religion section in the national identification card. Already in 1999 opponents of this decision suggested that with this move Georgia became "a testing-ground for cosmopolitanism" and there was a danger of Georgians becoming "tenants in their own country" (Reisner, 2010, p. 158). Dozens of Georgian writers and poets appealed to the President arguing that there were threats of the country losing its name and language.

Populist discourse with its reliance on orthodox Christianity constructs the non-orthodox west not only as the constitutive Other but in addition, represents Russia as closely related to the Self. The whole foreign policy articulation constituted by this narrative, advocates for closer ties with the Kremlin and challenges pro-western political elites. Hence, it also relies on the positive image of the Russian Federation. Developments under Putin's presidency are a reoccurring narrative in populist discourse as progressive and prosperous, in comparison to the "decaying" west.

The Eurasian Institute initiated a project titled "Public Movement for Russo-Georgian Dialogue and Cooperation." As is claimed in the report of the institute, it is an answer from the Georgian public to those political powers, which, from inside or outside, have been artificially increasing tension in the relations between two nations. Besides the economic benefits, as people from the Eurasian Institute argue, Georgia and Russia are connected with the shared Orthodox faith (Eurasian Institute, 2014, p. 24).

As negation is an important element in identity construction and making of the Self, such articulations of global threats to orthodox Christian civilization constitute a key pillar for populist narrative. The political elite in Georgia is presented as an ally of the "global elites" against the true people of Georgia.

5.2 Soviet Legacy

As I discussed in the previous subchapter, as ae result of the formula Georgian=orthodox Christian, the Georgian nation is constructed as an orphan nation related only to Russia as a big orthodox brother. This logic requires definition and reinterpretation of recent history from this perspective.

While addressing the legacy of the Soviet Union and trying to make sense of the country's recent history, the populist discursive construction takes rather a paradoxical stand. On the one hand, it attributes a positive role to life under Communist rule and to Stalin (as ethnically Georgian), but at the same time, incorporates orthodox Christianity as an inevitable part of the Georgian Self. There are many different aspects of Soviet life one could analyze in order to examine how the populist discourse tackles the Communist legacy. Due to the limited scope of this research, I concentrate only on one of those aspects. I examine how the legacy of Stalinism is addressed.

The Caucasus Barometer opinion survey results from 2012 illustrated an interesting trend. In response to the question regarding what best described their attitude towards Stalin, 3% chose admiration, 27% – respect, and 15% – sympathy, which altogether makes 45% of the respondents' feelings rather positive towards Stalin. In comparison, in Armenia, this number is 25% (3%, 16%, and 6% respectively) and in the case of Azerbaijan, only 21% feel rather positively towards Stalin. In contrast, in response to the question of whether Stalin was a cruel tyrant who was responsible for the death of millions, 53% of Georgians either completely or mostly agree, in comparison to 24% who completely or mostly disagree. The percentage of those who agree with that statement in Armenia and Azerbaijan was 69% and 68%, respectively (Caucasus Barometer, 2012). These figures are interesting, as, in addition to those who do not see the Soviet leader either in a negative light or as a brutal dictator, there are approximately 8% of Georgian respondents, who mostly agree that Stalin was a tyrant, who is responsible for the death of millions, but still either respect him or have sympathy for him.

The reason for such an odd picture is not to be sought in those respondents' admiration of murderers and brutal dictators, but instead, it has roots in the Georgian discourses on national identity. Stalin's ethnic background is a source of pride and egotism for what I have labeled as the exclusive conception of national identity. As a contemporary Georgian philosopher nicely put it, Stalin's heavy Georgian accent when he spoke Russian was a source of national pride. When a Georgian living in the era of Stalin would put the radio on and hear the leader speaking Russian with a Caucasian accent, he or she would realize that the "father" of all nations was of the same ethnic origin, which "gives such a power to the Georgian self-conscious, that any kind of humanitarian discussion of Stalin's crimes sounds ridiculous" (Maisuradze, 2011, p. 73). Stalin being a symbol of national pride is the reason that the destalinization processes which started soon after his death in 1953 caused unrest and mass protests in Georgia. The events which shook the streets of Tbilisi in the spring of 1956, were not so

much about defending the name of Stalin or his legacy, but rather it was an expression of Georgian nationalism. Khrushchev's famous speech at the 20th Congress of the C.P.S.U. in February of 1956 where he denounced the cult of Stalin, was perceived by Georgian youth as an attack on their national pride. At the beginning of March of the same year, around the anniversary of Stalin's death and just a couple of days after the Congress, tens of thousands of students started protesting in the streets of Tbilisi, Gori, Kutaisi and other towns of Georgia. By the 9th of March, Soviet authorities were forced to use firearms to disperse the manifestations. The exact number of victims of the events, which are known in Georgian history as the tragedy of the 9th of March 1956, is still unknown. Historians estimate it to be somewhere between 100 and 800. Ironically, the processes which escalated in defense of the person who was responsible for the occupation of the first republic of Georgia by Soviet Russia, became the source of the birth of the new wave of Georgian nationalism. While some scholars look for the causes of the unrests in the status shift of the Georgian SSR (Blauvelt, 2009), the offspring of the tragedy of the 9th of March was the very first underground organization which started propagating for the independence and national self-determination of Georgia (Abdaladze et al., 2008, pp. 184–185).

Another very good example of the relationship between Stalin and national pride is the story widely circulated in social media about the meeting of the Soviet leader with the Shah of Iran. Even the newspaper "Kviris Palitra," (Javakhishvili, 2017) which is one of the largest and relatively moderate in its views, reported the story claiming that the young Shah of Iran knelt in front of Stalin. As the Soviet leader helped him to get back on his knees, he turned towards other Georgians in the delegation and remarked in his native language, that's it's a pity Giorgi Saakadze, and King Erekle (Georgian historical figures involved in the battles against the Persian Empire) were not present to see the picture. Similarly, in 2016, the MP of the ruling coalition at the time, Gogi Topadze, is quoted as having said in one interview, that no Georgian patriot should use obscene language when speaking of Stalin ("Gogi Topadze – using obscene language…", 2016).

In the year 2013 Ilia II, patriarch of the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC), within the framework of his visit to Russia, where he met with his Russian counterpart and President Vladimir Putin, gave an interview to the journal Caucasus Politics. In his interview, he praised Stalin, calling him a prominent figure who was aware of Russia's importance to the world. He also claimed that he thought Stalin was a believer, especially in his later years. In the same interview, the head of the GOC claimed that Stalin, as a former student of the seminary himself, did a lot for the development of religious education in the Soviet Union. In addition, the Patriarch stated that he was crying after he heard the news of Stalin's death ("Ilia the second: I love Russia very much…," 2013).

In the summer of 2010, when the monument of Stalin was taken down, the newspaper "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" published a long opinion piece entitled "The Country of Slaves" (Berdzenishvili, 2010). Since the publication touches

upon key elements of the discourse, some parts should be cited at length. Firstly, the author claims that the removal of the statue is the biggest act of vandalism the world has ever seen: "In addition, every bastard and bitch, call a "bloodsucking tyrant" the person, who because he was following the way of Christ, was recognized as a saint by the Orthodox Church" (Berdzenishvili, 2010, p. 13).

The opinion piece goes on to argue how Stalin saved Georgia from extinction, and how the Soviet Union eradicated unemployment, provided free housing, healthcare, education, etc. The author also engages in reproducing the image of Stalin taking care of Georgian territories by claiming that "the truth was Stalin united Georgia with the Abkhazian SSR as SS Autonomy in 1931 … if America had not exploded an atomic bomb in 1945, Stalin would have been ready to return to Georgia those territories conquered by Turkey" (ibid).

There are two basic themes in this article which are important to highlight within the framework of this study. Firstly, the image of an Orthodox Christian Stalin, who was a true believer and was recognized as such by the Church. And secondly, he is portrayed as a true patriot who cared about Georgia. As a combination of those two strands of thought, Orthodox Christianity and the notion of being Georgian form a chain of signification which fixes the meaning of Stalin in relation to other possible meanings he could have, such as dictator, tyrant, the enemy of Georgia, etc.

Finally, orthodox Christian Stalin is the offspring of the discourses articulated from the 1990s. The reason for this is straightforward, as only after the breakup of the Soviet Union did orthodox Christianity become the master signifier for the populist discourse on national identity. With the disappearance of the communist ideology, the traditional meaning of Stalin was lost, and the chain of equivalence with orthodox Christianity as the nodal point expanded in the field of discursivity and tried to invest 'Stalin' with new meaning.

What is important to note here is that the roots of the image are not solely Georgian but go deep into the Russian religious discourse as well. However, it acquires a different level in the former case, as it is interlinked with the national identity narrative. Briefly discussing the origin of the myth of the Soviet leader believing in God might shed some light onto why such an idea managed to gain roots in some of the Orthodox Christian Churches. This image started to take shape during the Second World War. To be more precise, as Hitler's army was marching deeper into the territory of the Soviet Union, the communist propaganda machine started reproducing a more nationalist discourse to increase patriotic sentiments and support among the population. References to patriotic feelings were actively employed. World War II became the Great Patriotic War in Soviet Russia to associate it with the tsarist-era Patriotic War against Napoleon. Movies and novels started to appear based on the lives of historical heroes, battles, and events. In the year 1943, the Politburo decided to edit the national anthem of the USSR and replace the word "international" with Russia. The new anthem's lyrics were:

"An indestructible union of free republics
was bound together by Great Russ!"

Invoking nationalist sentiments required references to be made to orthodox Christianity, as well as the abandonment of the war on religion. Stalin went as far as restoring the Russian Patriarchate which had been abolished since the tsarist era. Churches were allowed to start functioning again, and priests were encouraged to perform prayers for the USSR. The Metropolitan of Moscow of that time is quoted as having called Stalin "our common father" (Sixsmith, 2011, p. 345).

There are two interesting legends which were born only at the beginning of the 1990s, but which actively contribute to the reproduction of the myth. One of them also became an inspiration for a controversial icon placed in the church of Saint Nikolas in Moscow. It was condemned by the officials from the Moscow Patriarchate and was quickly removed, however the story depicted on the icon is still reproduced as a fact in some of the discourses (Achmatova, 2010). The icon depicted Stalin meeting Matrona of Moscow, a saint living in his era. According to the legend, while Germans were advancing towards Moscow, Stalin paid a visit to Matrona. The blind saint predicted victory over Nazism, as long as Stalin remained in Moscow. The Soviet leader indeed stayed in the capital, and the USSR won the war, but there is no historical evidence of such a meeting ever taking place.

Second, a similar story argues that in 1941, while Metropolitan Ilya of Antioch was praying to God, the Virgin Mary appeared to him and instructed him to tell Russians that they should carry the Icon of the Mother of God of Kazan in Stalingrad, as well as in Moscow and Leningrad. In the battle of Stalingrad, the icon was present, and the victory was attributed to it. The legend has it that the Virgin Mary was also present on the side of Soviets in the attack on Konigsberg in 1944 and that German soldiers saw the image of her in the sky while their weapons would not fire (Orthodoxy.ge, n.d.). This legend is so firmly embedded in the clerical discourse of the Georgian Orthodox Church that references to it appear even in 2017. The most recent example being in November of the same year, as a minor incident took place in Georgia. Namely, one of the high clergymen came under fire from some members of society as he was accused of using a border police helicopter to fly over some towns in Eastern Georgia to bless the region. In his defense, metropolitan Sergi responded: "Our eparchy and borders of Georgia are blessed and flown over by icons sometimes … During the war, in the same manner, icons were taken around Moscow, and the enemy could not enter" ("mit'rop'olit'i sergi:…," 2017).

In 2015, one of the Georgian priests, father Ioane Chigogidze, filmed a documentary about Stalin, titled "Who Won the War" (Tskhoidze, 2015). In the movie it is argued that the breakout of the war between Germany and the USSR was a punishment from God for their struggle against the Christian faith. Later on, father Ioane suggests that the icon of Virgin Mary was leading the Soviet army in the battles against Nazi Germany (ibid). Returning to interdiscursivity

and intertextuality, which are vital concepts of discourse analysis, this movie serves as an example of those, as it refers to the legend already mentioned above about Metropolitan Ilya and his vision. It goes even further, by claiming that after the news of the vision reached Stalin, he asked Metropolitan Sergi if the Church was in need of anything else, to which he got the response that there was a lack of qualified clergymen.

Sputnik-Georgia quotes father Ioane from the movie, where he argues that

> after the war, Stalin, as promised, built 22,000 churches and monasteries. Clerical seminaries and academies were opened in the country. The age of rising faith began in the Soviet Union because all the prophecies came true and Stalin kept his promises (ibid).

The key strength of discourse theory lies in helping to understand the origin of the orthodox Christian Stalin from the perspective of identity as something that is never entirely fixed but in constant flux. It is always constituted and renegotiated according to the circumstances. Hence, despite the national identity discourse which uses orthodox Christianity as its nodal point being the product of the post-USSR epoch, it redefines and reproduces the image of Stalin by investing meaning through the expansion of the chain of signification. It excludes all the other meanings this sign could have and tries to fix it within the discourse. From this perspective, the fact that approximately 41% of Georgian respondents thought that Stalin believed in God, in contrast to 22.6% who said the opposite (Gugushvili et al., 2015), does not seem so paradoxical anymore. Especially if one takes into consideration that 77% of them mentioned Georgian as his nationality (ibid). These figures show that there is a strong connection between Stalin's ethnic background and his alleged religious faith.

2009's issue of "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" published the transcript of the conversation between Stalin, Eisenstein, and Cherkasov, titled: "Joseph Stalin: We are not Very Good Christians, but the Progressive Role of Christianity cannot be Denied" (2009).

In the small introduction, the text argues that Stalin was falsely accused of fighting against orthodox Christianity. Hence, publishing the transcript of his conversation about the movie Ivan the Terrible aims at illustrating that this was not the case. Although, reading the actual text and the passage where Stalin talks of Christianity's progressive role, reveals how discursive articulation reinterprets the facts. The passage is the following:

> We are not very good Christians, but the progressive role of Christianity at some stage, cannot be denied. This event was very important, as it was the turn of the Russian state towards the West and not being oriented to the East (ibid).

Whether Stalin was promoting or fighting Christianity is not clear from this text. It is a matter of interpretation and it depends on large interdiscursive and intertextual constructions.

In addition to Stalin's religious faith, the very consistent discourse which keeps reappearing in Georgia is the matter of Stalin's monuments and symbols. As I have already discussed in the first empirical chapter, while talking about the so-called "Liberty Charter," Georgia banned any use of Soviet symbols, monuments, street names, etc. This topic is especially sensitive in Gori, Stalin's hometown, where, despite the law, as of writing this thesis, the main avenue is named after Stalin. Not to mention the grandiose vintage museum in the center of town. The Georgian government did manage to remove Stalin's monument from the city center though, which to this day is a matter of dispute and argument in Gori.

In 2010, "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" published a news article taken from the internet forum about erecting a Stalin monument in the USA. This text illustrates the relationship between the image of Stalin, Soviet legacy and the populist conception of national identity. More specifically, in contrast to the liberal narrative, Stalin is seen as a national hero who gets appreciation even in the west, while in his own motherland he had been demonized.

> The minds of Americans have opened up, but we cannot say the same about Georgian anti-Stalinists. Even if they make lots of noise, they will not be able to erase this man from history. He belongs to history and his monument will stand in Gori forever. Although, there is a second option as well. As Georgia is a country, which follows fashion, and since they erected the monument of Stalin in America, maybe it will be erected here as well (Kldiashvili, 2010).

There are two interesting points in this small passage quoted above. It criticizes the liberal narrative's articulation of Stalin as a bloodthirsty tyrant and feeling shame and guilt for his nationality. Secondly, and more importantly, this discourse claims that the Georgian political elite is not able to act independently or take its own independent decisions. Instead, they follow and imitate their western counterparts. Hence, the rather sarcastic comment of the author about the possibility of erecting a Stalin monument in Georgia in the future.

While commenting on the Wikileaks case for "Sakartvelo da Msoflio", Khidirbergisvhili (2010b) spoke of the figure of Stalin as the bridge between Russia and Georgia, as something which brings these two peoples closer.

> It is only thanks to Yosef Besarionovich Stalin that China and Russia are friends today and not enemies! They know it in the Russian government, and they appreciate this, and this is reflected in their loyalty towards Georgia and Georgians … If not for the factor of Stalin, Georgia would have suffered with an adequate response from its great neighbour a long time ago – much more than Chechnya! But Putin knows – in the whole of history Russians never had people closer to them than Georgians, who gifted them Stalin, who restored and strengthened the glory of the Russian empire. It is as tsilly as if the Kremlin wants to restore the USSR – Putin wants to restore the Russian empire and he will manage to do that! And also, the union of Russia and Georgia – a strong

tandem which scares a lot in the post-Soviet space, especially – the Caucasian neighbours (ibid).

The Western-sceptic approach is highly embedded in the articulation of the current state of Georgia as subordinate to the EU and Washington. In some cases, this goes as far as suggesting that the country was more independent under Soviet rule.

In March 2011, as Georgia celebrated the tenth anniversary since the referendum on secession from the USSR, "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" devoted two pages to an opinion piece entitled "Twenty Years without Independence" (Moniava, 2011). The text argues that the Georgian state, in the last twenty years has departed from independence rather than the other way around. The author touches on the economic, social, demographic declines Georgia has experienced since the collapse of the USSR, and how such developments have limited the country's freedom of action. Furthermore, it criticizes the privatization of the 90s, accusing the United States of taking advantage of "greedy local political elites" who acted against the interests of their own motherland. In addition to economic and social problems, the texts also suggest that in 1991 Georgia left the security umbrella provided by Russia, while never receiving the same from the west. The rather lengthy opinion piece draws the following conclusion: "demonstrative departure from Russia does not raise the quality of independence, but in the end, drastically decreases it. … This is just reality" (ibid).

In the same issue, the newspaper published an interview with Akaki Asatiani, former chairman of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Georgia, the institution presiding over the declaration of independence from the Soviet Union ("Akaki Asatiani: Georgia…", 2011). In an interview, the politician claims that during the Soviet era, Georgia was more independent and freer in taking decisions. He provides 31st of March referendum on independence as an example of this freedom. On the other hand, "for the last 20-year period we have not been independent for real, but in fact, the country has been the subject of manipulation from the west, to be more exact, the United States of America, and a bargaining chip with Russia" (ibid).

He continues to say that Georgia was not an independent country anymore, the only independence was in deciding how to please the White House in ways even beyond what the latter was asking. In this particular interview, the former chairman also commented on the need for better relations with Russia, as there were mental and spiritual connections between the two.

In 2015, clergyman Theodore Gignadze, who is famous for holding public meetings with students and discussing various topics, while speaking to one of the TV channels, made the following remark regarding Georgian political elite:

> I remember the Soviet Union very well, … and now, when I look at them, they are not free. If back then they were being ruled from the Kremlin, now, they are being ruled from the west, Washington. But with the only difference that we were part of the republic of the common country, with equal rights, while today

you are not even a state [meaning Georgia has lower status than any state in the USA] (Gignadze, 2015).

Stalin's monument in the center of Gori became the main element of discord between the narratives, and the issue keeps resurfacing from time to time, especially around Stalin's birthday, the anniversary of his death or Victory Day. As I have already mentioned, while doing discourse analysis, I focused not on the details of Stalinist or communist sentiments, but rather on how the master signifier – orthodox Christianity – redefines and reproduces the meaning of Stalin as a floating signifier. To illustrate this point, I will quote a passage from an open letter published in "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" signed by notable Georgian Stalinists and communists and calling the government to restore his monument in Gori. "Stalinist teachings are being regarded as building a socialist state, the foundation of which is orthodox Christianity" (Makharadze et al, 2013).

In this one sentence, we can read how the whole articulation project takes shape. How the meanings are contested and differently articulated through the master signifier. If, for the liberal narrative, Stalin is a tyrant and bloodthirsty dictator who executed hundreds of priests and destroyed churches, for the narrative with orthodox Christianity as the master signifier, Stalinist teachings are interlinked with religious faithas the latter itself is the source of national identification for populist discourse.

As World War II represents one of the key sacred themes in the post-Soviet memory, it is natural to expect that it will remain highly contested between the parallel articulations of national identities. Timothy Snyder in his book "The Road to Unfreedom" (2018, p. 146) claims that despite claims in official Soviet propaganda that fascism arose from capitalism, Stalin's celebration of the victory not so much of the USSR, but of Russia, generalized the image of the "fascist" enemy as the outsider rather than the capitalist. Brezhnev took this one step further, by changing the meaning of word "fascism." "It no longer suggested a state of capitalism that might be overcome, … "Fascism" meant the eternal threat from the West, of which the Second World War was an example" (ibid).

As a result of this shift, for the current Russian political elite educated in the 70s, "fascist" came to mean "anti-Russian." Snyder (ibid) argues that in the Russian language it is practically a grammatical error to think of a Russian as a fascist. A similar line of logic could be extended to the exclusive i.e. populist conception of national identity. The texts which I analyzed revealed how this articulation, in a similar manner, constructs the dichotomy of "fascist" vs. orthodox Christian. By the former, it is understood as not only fascist according to the literal meaning of this word, but also any other group, which is represented as a constitutive other. In several instances I encountered depictions of the Second World War as the orthodox Christian Stalin's battle against globalization, freemasonry, LGBTQ ideology, etc. They all fall under one term "fascism" which, then, becomes a type of an umbrella term for everything, which is constructed as a threat. In addition to Stalin, another dimension where

this competition over the representation of the Soviet past occurs is the celebration of Victory Day. Despite Georgia celebrating victory over Nazi Germany on 9th May, similar to Russia, there are increased calls from the political elite do it on 8th instead. Victory Day is celebrated on 8th in almost all the western European countries, while its holiday is the day after in Russia and most of the former Soviet Union. In the previous empirical chapter, where I examined the liberal narrative on national identity, I tried to outline some basic elements and arguments in support of this move. Here, however I would like to touch upon how the celebration on 9th May is defended, and how this becomes a matter of civilizational belonging for the populist narrative. Furthermore, I believe this should be seen in the broader context of opposition to de-Communization attempts actively initiated by the post-Rose Revolution government of Georgia.

In an interview with "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" in 2013, one of the intellectual masterminds behind this narrative and a regular contributor of the newspaper, Alexander Ch'ach'ia made similar claims. He suggested that Hitler was interested in giving maximum individual freedoms to the conquered nations. The German dictator, according to Ch'ach'ia, believed that by promoting sexual freedom or allowing all the religious sects to act with no constraints, would make it easier to control nations and take their statehood away. "Now, compare those freedoms, which Hitler wanted to give us for our degradation, with freedoms, that the liberal part of our society and their western curators are asking from us. Are they not the same?" ("I Think, We Still…", 2013).

This narrative falls in line with the Russian narrative of a global western conspiracy against traditional families and conservative values[9]. The source of this eternal threat is the fascist west, understood not as a concrete ideology or isolated historical event, but rather as the constitutive other of the (post)Soviet Self.

Recent history is contested between parallel articulations not only on the textual level but also on the level of symbols, institutions, etc. Immediately after the Rose Revolution, the Georgian government intensified implementing policies and practices of imprinting the image of the Soviet Union and Russia as an occupant and oppressor. In 2006, the occupation museum was founded, despite serious irritation expressed by the authorities in the Kremlin. The discursive articulation of the meaning attached to the museum by the liberal narrative on national identity I have largely covered in the first empirical chapter of the thesis. Here I would like to concentrate on a competing, alternative interpretation of the museum, and the general meaning of occupation by the Soviet Union. I must repeat here again that populist far-right groups are not homogenous when it comes to their attitudes towards the USSR and Russia as its successor. Despite being western-sceptic, that does not automatically make

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[9]   See for instance Russian foreign minister Lavrov's statement in 2014 that the reason why the West had distanced itself from Russia was because of the latter's return to orthodox Christianity. He argued that the USA and the West did so in an attempt to maintain dominance and impose its system of values on the rest of the world ("The West has…", 2014).

all the anti-liberal and nationalist groups supporters of a Russia-friendly foreign policy agenda. I am not going to engage with all the possible meanings which are given to recent history, but rather I will be guided by the intertextuality and interdiscursivity of the texts I chose to analyze. These texts together juxtapose Russia/USSR with the west and attach positive meaning to the former. "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" in 2013 devoted two pages to criticizing the occupation museum (Kordzadze, 2013). The text is relatively long, and it engages in criticism from several angles. I will briefly introduce the key points around which this articulation takes place, in order to illustrate the relationship between articulation of the Self and meaning given to historical facts. First, the text tried to draw a parallel between the Georgian government of 1918–1921 and post-Rose Revolution government of president Saakashvili and their activities during the military conflict.

> The country was collapsing on the heads of both of them, and yet they were busy with festivities; both were aspiring towards Europe, swearing Europeanness, but Europeans themselves thought otherwise. Both were sold like goats by the "western partners": first – on 25th of February 1921, second – in August 2008 (ibid).

These lines express not just criticism of the ruling elites but try to spread western-sceptic feelings. "What can you demand from those, who … today divide people as the "occupier" and the "occupied" and with such provocations are planting discord, the enmity between the two orthodox Christian nations!" (ibid).

This passage highlights the importance of religion as a master signifier around which Georgian and Russian identity is constructed and is juxtaposed against the non-orthodox Christian Other i.e. the west. This is further elaborated in the next paragraph, which was printed in bold in order to emphasize the point.

> In 2006, marionette Saakashvili, of course by the order of his western partners, was planning largescale provocations against Russia. And this morally, the politically damaging pseudo-historical museum was one of the important links in the chain of great provocations planned in the State Department of the USA! (ibid).

In other words, it is presented in such discourse, not as ae natural part of Georgian identity, but rather as being forced artificially by the "colonial" west. The text argues that "serious" states do not establish such museums; it is done only by "failed states." A reading of the Soviet military invasion in 1921 as an act of occupation is articulated as being enforced by the West.

The third direction, in which the argument in this text proceeds, is a discourse consistently reappears in the populist narrative – life was better under the Soviet rule, while the difficulties of current times are largely to be blamed on the west.

I do not know of any other examples in history, when in the occupied country fundamental scientific schools are established, higher educational institutions, research institutions; a backward agrarian country is developed into an industrial-agrarian one. Art is blossoming, music, filmography, theater! (ibid).

This paragraph nicely summarizes how the memory of the Soviet past is interpreted by the populist discourse. Articulation of the recent past as an occupation which had prevented Georgia's integration into the European family i.e. the narrative of liberal political elites is rejected by appealing to modernization, developments in science, education, art, etc. under the Soviet rule.

An important element which I must emphasize is that Russia, as the legal successor of the USSR and as an orthodox nation is seen as the continuation of those "good years" of the Communist times. In April 2000, "Asaval-Dasavali" published an interview with professor Vakhtang Goguadze titled "Give Me Back My Russia" (2000). In an interview, the respondent suggests that the confrontational relations between the two neighbors are a crime. He goes as far as arguing that even the tragedy of 9thApril 1989 (the massacre of Georgian protesters by Soviet troops) was caused by the Americans. "They should look towards Washington, which is the source of all the tragedies befallen on us. 9th of April was also part of the plan of the destruction of the Soviet Union, made from across the ocean" (ibid).

The text continues further, arguing that the first Republic of Georgia would not have survived if not for the Soviet occupation. "Soviet Georgia was a country of incomplete independence, yet it had strong borders and territorial integrity. Our country was ours" (ibid).

This directly echoes the narrative that Georgia was more independent as part of the USSR than it is now. It develops the argument that the current political elite of Georgia is being ruled from the United States and does not really serve the interests of the country.

5.3 The West (EU and NATO)

One of the advantages of discourse theory as a methodological framework is its ability to examine the ways in which differences between social elements are cancelled out through the chains of equivalence or difference. In other words, although the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union are substantially different organizations when it comes to the members, geographical area or goals, Georgian national identity discourse articulates them either equally distant from or close to the Self.

The empirical analysis revealed an important detail which marks a substantial difference between the populist and liberal narratives. It is the role that the United States of America is attributed in this articulation, and how much similar it is to conspiracy theories. In this case, there is a global conspiracy against orthodox Christian Georgia and the political elite is portrayed as part of

the secret plot. An opinion piece by Dimitri Moniava published in "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" in 2009 titled "Who is Fighting the Patriarch and Why?" argues that there are at least nine different groups working against the head of the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC). For the purpose of this thesis, the discursive construction of one group out of this nine is important. More specifically, this group is, what the opinion piece calls a secularist group guided by liberal values, which through the state-controlled media presented events as natural conflicts between "the progressive society and the retrograde patriarchate" (Moniava, 2009, p. 4). The publication goes even further by suggesting that the restoration of the monarchy (an idea proposed by the Patriarchate) would bring "real independence" while "our politicians, in order to come to power, required informal, but still decisive, permission from Moscow, later from Washington, the King is independent of this, he is not dependent on foreign forces" (ibid, p. 5).

The restoration of the monarchy as such is not the main focus of this research, but rather how the discourse articulates it in relation to this proposal. To be more exact, it is constructed as a challenge to the existing establishment in order to achieve the "real" independence and "decolonization." While the West, and more specifically Washington, is constructed as the center of this colonial power.

In the same issue, Arno Khidirbegishvili (2009, p. 21) published an article titled "Why did the Russian Forces not Enter Tbilisi?" In addition to criticizing the post-Rose revolution government for being too young to remember the "Russian-Georgian friendship," this publication is interesting for the way the United States is constructed. To quote the passage at length:

> But our "bad taste" revealed itself in our choice of new friends: America, the center of world globalization, was always a stranger in the East, "strange body," geopolitically a non-regional player, and because of that, finally, despite the sympathies towards the new president of the United States of America, he will always remain isolated, and rejected in the Caucasus! Poland, the Baltic countries, the United States of America – none of them care about Georgia, they just use it as a painful spot to press on which can cause pain to Russia (ibid).

Breaking down the text reveals how the articulation takes shape. Firstly, the emphasis is placed on the US as the center of the West with the Caucasus being the East and thus, the stranger, the Other, to the former. Secondly, if for the discursive construction of the pro-Western foreign policy, the case of Central and Eastern Europe represents an example to follow, the chain of significations for populist narrative goes the opposite way. The Baltics along with Poland are projected as strangers to the Caucasus. Instead of role models and the closest allies, they are constructed as strangers. Finally, there is an attempt to articulate the dichotomy between Russia and the West, with both being in conflict with each other.

Furthermore, "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" devotes pages to the translation and publication of articles from various Russian news outlets. For instance, in the same issue from 2009, there is a translation of an article by Ekaterina Muromceva for RIA Novosty titled "Saakashvili – Yushchenko: Duet on Bandura" (ibid, 2009, p. 30). Analyzing the content of the article, especially last two paragraphs, sheds some light on how these discursively constructed narratives coming from Russia are integrated. Usually, a parallel is drawn between the Ukrainian and Georgian governments at the time, as both came into power through color revolutions and pursued clear pro-Western foreign policies. Both presidents' policies are blamed for "dead-ends" and the solution is described as "at the expense of the Western loaners."

> Synchrony between the behaviors of Saakashvili – Yushchenko lead us to believe that plans for their actions are made in the same center on the other side of the ocean.
>   What should Moscow do? Russia does not intervene in its domestic business. Now it has a chance to support forces in the neighborhood, oriented on real nationalism (ibid).

This line of discourse is further expanded in the following week's issue. "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" published an article titled "Yushchenko is preparing Crimea for Turkey" (2009, p. 3). According to the text, the Ukrainian government is step-by-step sacrificing lands of their own country for NATO membership. More specifically, while commenting on the case of maritime delamination in the black sea between Romania and Ukraine, the newspaper cites one of the politicians from the opposition who claimed that "they [Yushchenko and his cabinet] will continue giving away Ukrainian territories to members of NATO. … I do not exclude the possibility that they will do everything so that Turkey can get Crimea as a gift."

What is even more interesting, is that this is portrayed as a grand plan, a conspiracy, designed in Washington, while the post-Orange Revolution government helps to make this plot come true. In such populist articulations, the West is generalized into the European Union and NATO with the United States being the mastermind behind the conspiracy.

Liminal discourses, both from liberal and populist texts share similar characteristics in attributing to Georgia a second-class status vis-à-vis the West. On the other hand, there are major differences between the two. As I have demonstrated in the first empirical chapter of this research, the dominant narrative opts for what can be defined as self-colonization, while the texts covered in this chapter reveal another direction that the discourse on liminality can take. More specifically, it is critical of the West as the global dominant force and calls for more autonomous, nationalist policies. In stigma theory terms, we could say that the populist narrative instead of normalcy, takes pride in this inferiority vis-à-vis liberal-democratic Europe and engages in tactics of counter-stigmatization.

Another opinion piece by Dimitri Moniava (2009a) "Once in a Banana Republic" published by "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" illustrates how this different articulation takes shape. The text discusses the potential role of the United States in the political crisis, which took place in Georgia in the spring of 2009. What is interesting is that, the author from the very beginning dismisses the possibility of Washington staying away from intervening in the political crisis. The text argues that as the US allocated 242 million dollars to Georgia, "this amount of money, especially in the conditions of economic crisis, will not be allocated by anybody unless they are not sure that Georgia will have a government, which will provide protection for the interests of the USA" (ibid).

In other words, Georgia is constructed as a "banana republic", a second-class state, whose political landscape is fully dependent on decisions taken in the White House.

In the same issue of the newspaper was an interview with Gogi Topadze titled "Why Did Gogi Topadze Argue with Matthew Bryza?!" ("Why Did Gogi Topadze…", 2009). The latter was serving at the time as deputy assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs and was responsible for policy oversight and management of relations with countries in the Caucasus and Southern Europe, while Gogi Topadze is a Georgian politician who was a parliament member from the ruling coalition in the years 2012–2016. The MP argues that social and economic policies are disastrous due to directives coming from the West. "You cannot provide any example from history of when the country was ruled by foreigners and it revived or became stronger" (ibid).

Hinting at American dominance and arguing that institutions such as the International Monetary Fund or Soros Foundation serve the interests of US foreign policy and have destroyed economies of various countries. "Therefore, unless political activities of citizens in Georgia increase so that we ourselves can choose our political leader, we will be in this difficult position forever" (ibid).

In other words, the Georgian political elite is accused of serving foreign interests and of not being able to stand up to those who give directions from over the ocean. Another term used by the MP is not being able to defend the "national position."

In May "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" published a letter by Bondo Mdzinarashvili, the director of another conservative media channel "Obiektivi" which is closely associated with the Alliance of Patriots of Georgia. The letter heavily criticizes government's pro-NATO foreign policy, which he calls not pro-Western but pro-American. Furthermore, he claims that pro-US sentiments in the country were dying out as Georgia was "turning back to traditional values" (Mdzinarashvili, 2009).

It is interesting to note that traditional values are projected as something which stands in opposition to being used as a "blind instrument" in the interests of Washington, while the latter itself is different and a stranger to Georgia's real Self. "Turning back to traditional values is a very important moment, and if we

defend our Self as well, we will not become a blind weapon for serving others' goals" (ibid).

In June 2009, "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" published an article titled "Oh Brother, The Fate of the Aborigine is Difficult" (Moniava, 2009b). There is one passage from this rather long opinion piece which is interesting for the argument developed in this research. More specifically, the Georgian government's policies in regard to foreign investments are compared to "cargo cults" i.e. a belief system which developed among a relatively underdeveloped society. It implies practicing certain rituals and believing that they would help bring modern goods, which were originally provided by the Western imperial powers. Drawing such parallels is an example of an articulatory practice, which aims at not just recognizing inferiority or the second-class status vis-à-vis the West (The EU and the USA) but in stigma theory terms, wearing it as a "badge of honor." It is an example of a counter stigmatization strategy.

Another text highlights on famous phrase uttered by late PM Zurab Zhvania "I am Georgian, therefore, I am European" and sarcastically extends it to NATO. Furthermore, it compares the Georgian political elite's commitment to send troops to Afghanistan or willingness to host military bases in Georgia to Matrosov's story, the latter being known in the Soviet Union as a soldier who blocked German machine gun fire using his own body. As the article argues, the Georgian government is ready to sacrifice its own population while NATO in contrast does not keep its promises (Giorgidze, 2009).

What is interesting is that this text also plays linguistically with the motto coined by the supporters of Euro-Atlantic integration "may NATO be here" changing it into "may the cross be here." Additionally, this comparison is used to illustrate the contradiction between Orthodox Christianity and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

What is more telling, at the end of the article, is that "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" provides the results of a survey conducted among its readers regarding approval of the government's foreign policy trajectories. 87,43 percent disapprove of a pro-NATO approach, in contrast to 9,14% who support it. These numbers are telling of a vicious circle of foreign policy and identity discourses mutually reproducing each other.

Although populist discourse is critical of the European Union as well, the United States of America is constructed as the main actor behind the western agenda. Most of the texts which were examined, while speaking of globalization, the East/West confrontation or Georgian foreign policy refer to Washington as the main villain. To provide an example, at the end of October 2009, "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" published an interview with the professor of political science Jalashvili, some parts of which should be quoted at length. While commenting on a video spread on social media, mocking Patriarch Ilia II, he remarked:

This is the process of globalization, the purpose of which is change of values, so that the whole world, and especially small nations, are identical to western, to be more exact, American civilization, not only from a military perspective, but in terms of culture, mentality, legislation, lifestyle and the other basic parameters ("Jimi Jalashvili: …", 2009).

This is an example of the discursive construction of globalization as an American conspiracy against traditional values, authentic culture, etc. while Orthodox Christian Russia is articulated as the opposition to this trend.

Russia is way closer to Orthodox Christianity than we and our government are. Even more, there, people's and the government's attitude towards religious issues are absolutely identical, unlike us, where the ruling force almost openly opposes faith. Therefore, the fact that there exists opinion that suggests the source of globalization and the main enemy of Orthodox Christianity is Russia, makes me believe that we were not able to identify the essence of the problem and, hence, will not be able to find a solution… (ibid).

The othering of the West takes shape in the articulation of traditional vs. liberal value systems. Homophobia is one vital element of this discursive construction. In its first issue for the year 2010, "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" devoted two pages to the text, which according to the author is based on a review of the foreign press (Saneblidze, 2010). The article is titled "Give Way to Homosexuals! How the World Religion is being Created." The text claims that organizations working in Georgia for the Soros Foundation or British Council, serve globalization by promoting gay rights, sex education, enhancing the influx of migrants, etc. While orthodox Christianity is projected as the only force opposing the "attack of global sodomites." This is described as an attack on all the traditional religions. For instance, the text touches upon the issue of so-called liberal Islam and argues that: ""Euroislam" allows lust, alcoholism, drug use, and sodomy, meaning itis destroying all the positive features regular Islam has" (ibid).

In other words, the liberal value system connected with Euro-Atlantic foreign policy is connected with everything deviant and perverted. What is even more interesting is that this article argues that the West is responsible for creating the image of backward religious fundamentalists to portray itself as modern and progressive. Wahhabism is blamed on the former for instance, and the author claims, western intelligence services are actually controlling Wahhabi groups.

It is interesting that where Wahhabis are winning, very quickly they are replaced with "liberal Islamists", who act in the rules and manners of sodomite Europe… For instance, self-recognized Kosovo's parliament already adopted a "constitution," according to which "discrimination" against gays and lesbians is unacceptable. The neighboring, seemingly Muslim, Albania is planning to recognize homosexual marriage (ibid).

This "world" religion is blamed for conspiring together with religious sects against orthodox Christianity in Ukraine. "All the sects supported the pro-American coup, while the Ukrainian Orthodox Christian Church was categorically against it" (ibid).

"Sakartvelo da Msoflio" devoted a couple of issues in the spring of 2010 to a discussion on why the western value system was incompatible with the Georgian one. These publications were based on the thoughts of professor A. Ch'ach'ia, who was awarded by President Putin with the medal of honor for his contribution to strengthening the friendship with the Russian Federation (Pataridze, 2019, p. 19) and is known for rather a negative attitude towards pro-western foreign policy in his publications. This particular text "That, What Was Said 13 Years Ago" is written by a regular contributor of Saneblidze and it is a review of Ch'ach'ia's works. Some parts of the publication are illustrative of how the West is constructed as the stranger to Georgia's Self and subsequently, foreign policy orientation promoted by the political elites is rejected. In the article, the American family is described as based on egoism, and unacceptable for Georgian society, not because it is either good or bad, but simply because they are different.

> The western society is the society of independent individuals. Georgian society on the other hand was historically formed on the principles of family, the members of which are people closely connected and filled with mutual responsibilities (Saneblidze, 2010b).

Another passage from the text emphasizes that imitating western societies is dangerous for Georgia, as it is not natural for this culture.

> Georgia should follow its own historical trajectory of development, taking into consideration its own sociocultural characteristics and should keep and develop its own national specificity, traditions developed through the history of many centuries, and moral norms (ibid).

The text argues that a pro-western orientation is unfortunately understood as coming at the expense of national culture, traditions, lifestyle, etc. and implements everything perverted and negative. Imitation and mimicry are described as instruments in the hands of "the other, who aspire for world dominance" to destroy other nations.

The text is concluded with the following passage:

> With the blind and artificial implementation of the principles of western societies' existence, with the imitation of stranger orientations and values to us, we still will not become Americans, but we will lose Georgianess (ibid).

This civilizational discourse of the difference between the Georgian and European civilizations is not strictly limited to foreign policy discussion but is revealed in everyday debates, which are seemingly unrelated to foreign policy.

For instance, one TV show, which briefly appeared in Georgian media, caused lots of worries among conservative groups. It was called "Ghame Shorenastan Ertad" or night with Shorena in translation. The show addressed the topics of sex, lovemaking, and intimacy. AFP reported this development and even interviewed the anchor of the show. This coverage was echoed by the editorial of "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" in March 2010. The very brief text is very critical of French media coverage and of the seemingly condescending tone.

> They [French] are mostly surprised by the conservatism of Georgians. Maybe, from "therefore European" we will become "true Europeans" with the help of "Ghame Shorenastan Ertad", the Georgian population becomes "more civilized" and 9 out of 10 young people among us will welcome sex before marriage as well. It's good, that at least 90 percent still negatively think of homosexuality, and we do not have a catastrophic picture here ("Sex-Show Worries...", 2010).

This passage is illustrative in a couple of ways. It reinforces the narrative that the agenda coming from the European Union or the USA is aimed at sexual perversion and degradation. Secondly, this small editorial provides a good example of how unlike the liberal discursive conception of the Self, populism is skeptical of the patronizing and condescending tone of the west. Putting "more civilized" and "true European" in quotation marks further reinforces the negative context attached to Europe.

In 2010, the Georgian government launched a program aimed at improving English language skills among school students. This involved hosting 10 000 teachers from all around the globe to assist pedagogues in public schools. Naturally, the prospect of such an influx of foreigners raised worries among the conservative forces. The political elite was criticized and accused of forcing the English language on Georgians and deliberately suppressing Georgian.

> This should be accessed as an expression of Georgia's wish to bind themselves to the Anglo-American universe, but it seems, those who plan such activities, are not familiar with the country they rule (for now) that well (Moniava, 2010).

As the author of publication argues, Georgians tend to do exactly the opposite of what they are forced to. The result of such forceful spread of the English language, according to the text, would be the rise of anti-Americanism and rejection of everything American.

A similar argument is elaborated upon further in the same issue of "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" by a well-known pro-Russian public figure, Arno Khidirbegishvili (2010). According to his contribution to the newspaper, the invitation of English language teachers represents deliberate tactics of the political elite turning the Georgian nation into service providers for foreigners.

> President Saakashvili is quite consistent here – he wants the USA and does not want the Russian Federation. If it had been up to him, he would have moved Georgia to the American continent. The USA, which knows that it lost the war

for Georgia and the Caucasus, is preparing for revenge when English-speaking teenagers grow up, come out to the streets from "McDonalds" and say their words (Khidirbegishvili, 2010).

Another passage also refers to globalization and argues that

> In its [globalization] mother tongue (English) distributes around hamburgers, cheeseburgers, and promises of easy life, which give thousands of random illusions to Georgian youth about our European ancestry, joining the European family quickly, and about the security provided by the North Atlantic alliance… (ibid).

There is a lot to unpack here. Firstly, there is a clear dichotomy between the US and the Russian Federation, while the Georgian Self is constructed as having to choose between the two. Furthermore, the European perspective is constructed as illusionary, along with the NATO security umbrella.

Finally, the English language teaching program is regarded by this narrative as an instrument or tool in the hands of the global elites to turn the Georgian nation into servants.

> Indeed, Saakashvili has turned Georgia into one big hotel, into a country of servants, where tourists will come to rest … But there will be no single factory or fabric so that they would breathe clean air! We, Georgians, on the other hand, both men and women, will be serving them, as our pockets will not be able to afford the expenses of living in this hotel (ibid).

The issues of inviting thousands of English language teachers and making English language examinations compulsory for those who wish to graduate from university dominated discourse and did not limit itself to one issue. For instance, in texts from the week after, parallels with the Soviet Union are drawn and it is argued that even Russian did not have such privileges at that time. "Such privileges were not attributed even to Russian in the Soviet period. That period is being condemned, called shameful, and is not this shameful?" (Tabatadze, 2010).

In an interview, a Georgian language teacher argues that the purpose of all this is to "fully get rid of, remove Georgian language and declare English as the second state language" (ibid).

In addition to othering, the western-skeptical articulation of national identity heavily relies on the projection of the European Union or Washington as an oppressive force in the quest for world domination, which threats small nations and their culture. Furthermore, such juxtaposing blames the political elite for voluntarily ascribing second-class status to oneself vis-à-vis the west. This narrative is apparent while examining the response to the article published by "The Independent". It was dedicated to the developments in the mountainous Svaneti region, titled: "Georgia's mountain wilderness opens up to the world". Due to the arguments made in this section of this study, this article is not

discussed, but instead, a critical response published in "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" is analyzed.

A regular contributor to this newspaper, Armaz Saneblidze (2010c) focuses on the term wilderness and interprets these words by suggesting that the former called the Svaneti region wild, not in terms of nature, but in terms of under-development and backwardness. What is of particular importance, is that this text argues that such reasoning represents president Saakashvili's narrative i.e. the political elite of the country willingly presents its own region as wild and backward, and still to be developed. The text suggests that the Georgian government is purposefully downplaying and not giving enough credit to the Soviet past, as between 1973–79 Svaneti experienced an increase of infrastructural projects.

Another interesting aspect of Western articulation inverting widely established meanings and narratives. A very prominent example is a democracy, or whether the West is indeed interested in promoting reforms in this direction. It is a recurring narrative that the West and especially the Unites States support political elites, which promote a global liberal agenda by undemocratic means. This articulation is especially apparent when examining texts from the period 2007–2012 when Saakashvili's government suppressed and, on numerous occasions, raided opposition political groups and media. For instance, in one of the opinion pieces about Eurasian Economic Unity, a regular contributor of "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" argues that the Georgian political elite would use this as proof that president Putin wanted to restore the Soviet Union. This would be a message for external actors "there is no time for democracy, Russia is planning to swallow us and maybe you could accept us in NATO without democracy" (Mkheidze, 2011).

This text is interesting due to some other aspects as well. The title of the publication "I am Georgian, therefore – Eurasian" plays with a famous speech by late PM called "I am Georgian therefore I am European". The author reaches this conclusion by arguing that Georgians geographically, culturally and mentally are both Asians and Europeans at the same time. "Historically, we have equally acquired the best from Asian-eastern and western-European cultures and have not leaned too much towards one or another" (ibid).

The text suggests that for Georgians, Asian despotism, as well as perversions coming from the west, were equally unacceptable. Furthermore, the texts argue that Georgian's natural place is in the post-Soviet space, as they are being expected with open arms over there.

In this articulation, there is a similarity between the Soviet Union and the United States. When the relationship between the political elite of Georgia and Washington is criticized, it is projected as a similar subjection to that of the USSR. In 2012, when America was entering its presidential election campaign, "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" published an article "Mitt Romney Is Not Going to Give Himself a Headache Because of Georgia" (Moniava, 2012). The full discussion of Georgia's role in US presidential election campaigns is not important for this thesis. Rather what is of interest for this research is the

opening passage of the text. "The Georgian political elite is observing American elections even more closely than changes in the SUCP CC's politburo membership. It wants to foresee what changes happen in Washington, in order to be prepared" (ibid). The interplay between the United States and the USSR is illustrative of the difference between the parallel narratives' perceptions of the west.

With the othering of the West, Russian civilizational discourse becomes the alternative which populist articulation refers to. To 2013's Valdai Discussion Club's meeting "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" devoted four pages to Putin's address to the participants.[10]

The newspaper argues that Putin came across as "old kind Putin" who has captured the audience with interest and attention. Joking and at the same time "punching" Europeans ("Sovereign Democracy…," 2013). I do not intend to analyze the full speech of President Putin, but instead what I want to illustrate is that publishing the whole speech without any criticism, as it was delivered by "kind" Putin, indicates that this discursive construction fully shares sentiments with the Russian political elite's narrative about the "morally degraded and decaying" west, a global gay conspiracy against conservative values, etc.

For the liberal discourse on national identity on the other hand, the Association Agreement with the European Union represents one of the milestones on the nation's long journey of returning back to the "family." The populist narratives attempt to construct this document as another agreement which does not give anything particular and concrete, while continuing to keep Georgian society on the hook. What the populist narrative attempts to achieve is integrating the Association Agreement in the discourse on global western conspiracy under the American leadership against the orthodox Christian nations. A parallel is drawn between Brussels and Washington, both of which, according to this narrative, pose threats to Georgian traditions and the national Self. The government, which negotiated and signed the AA, is constructed as a servant of the west, betraying "national interests." The political elite is accused of not even trying to negotiate for the deal, but obediently accepting all the conditions in the agreement, hence, getting the least bonuses from the EU in comparison to other post-Soviet states (Mkheidze, 2013; Moniava, 2013).

In 2014, the situation in Ukraine became tense and led to what later came to be known as the Revolution of Dignity and the subsequent annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation. In their assessment and interpretation of those developments, competing narratives in Georgia have clashed. In contrast to the liberal narrative which aligned with what had already been established in most of the political or media discourse, populists shared the Russian side of the story – reproducing the image of the west as a colonial power and imperial

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[10] The Valdai Discussion Club itself was established in 2004 and is named after the lake located in Russia where the club's first meeting took place. It is a think-tank closely associated with the Russian political elite and Vladimir Putin personally, who has met with the participants every year since its founding.

force vis-à-vis the subordinated and subjected members of Eastern Partnership. In an issue from February2014, "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" devoted several articles to the developments in Ukraine. One of them was titled "Colonization of Ukraine – A Movie that Georgians Have Already Seen" (Moniava, 2014). This text suggests that the clashes taking place in Ukraine were directed and guided by the United States of America. Furthermore, the text draws a parallel with the August War of 2008, by arguing that there was a Summer Olympics taking place, as the Georgian dissolution started, and in a similar manner, in 2014, the Sochi Winter Olympics were happening, Americans were behind whatever was happening in Kyiv. In the same issue, the newspaper published collected extracts from Russian website gazetta.ru and presented them under the title "Until When Will the USA Feed Hungry Ukraine?" (2014). The title of the collage itself indicates what the general idea the text tries to conceive is. Furthermore, as some high-profile politicians from the post-Rose Revolution government, including the former president of Georgia, Mikhail Saakashvili joined the ranks of the new Ukrainian government, populist discourse tried to link criticism of the local political elite with the criticism of the new authorities in Kyiv. In January 2015 "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" published an opinion piece, which argued that Ukraine was ruled from overseas, hinting at the Americans, and as an example of this ruling, mentioned the political elite, which came into power in Georgia after 2003, and ended up being transferred to Ukraine (Davtuliani, 2015). What is especially interesting for the argument I am trying to develop in this chapter is another extract from the same text, which is the following: "Today Ukraine is way less sovereign than it was in Soviet times – back then only the second secretary was appointed by Moscow, while Washington has imposed barely deposed from Georgia "sons of bitches" on 45-million country!" (ibid).

This passage illustrates several important points: firstly, it established a link between the Rose Revolution of 2003 and the so-called Revolution of Dignity of 2015. Secondly, both political elites, which came into power through these revolutions, are connected to the United States or the West in general and are projected as a stranger, externally enforced on the societies in post-Soviet space. Lastly, the language in which the post-revolution political elites are framed, clearly indicates negative attitudes toward them.

Similar articulation is apparent in one publication of the Institute of Eurasia "Ukraine: Western Crusade against Orthodox Civilization Continues" ("Ukraina: Dasavletis Lashqroba Martmadidebeli Civilizaciis Tsinaamghdeg Grdzeldeba") (Rtskhiladze, 2014). As the title already suggests, the "Revolution of Dignity" is constructed as just another instance of the long crusade against orthodox Christianity. The 40-page publication starts with the NATO air-bombing campaign in Serbia as the start of this civilizational battle with the final goal of ""democratization" – the subjection of Russia" (Rtskhiladze, 2014, p. 4). Democratization and the liberalization agenda coming from the European Union and NATO, in other words, are constructed as weapons against orthodox

civilization, which, after the collapse of the USSR, remains the sole opposing force to the United States.

> The loyalty of Serbs, Russians, Georgians and other nations to orthodox Christianity means their independence from and "disobedience" of, the western institutions. Orthodox Christianity unites the people of Eastern Europe inside the boundaries of one civilization (cultural-political area), the center of which, due to its geographical scale, population, military, and economic might and other basic parameters, is Russia (ibid, p. 4).

This passage illustrates how this articulation transforms foreign policy into civilizational dichotomy and juxtaposes the EU and the USA with orthodox Christianity. Furthermore, Russia is constructed as the center of the civilization, which the west is crusading against. Such a dichotomy makes it possible for this discourse to construct a pro-European foreign policy, which requires extensive reforms in many fields, as strange and alien to orthodox civilization. "The "Color Revolutions" turned out to be alien, carriers of pseudo values which are far from orthodox Christianity" (ibid).

This narrative constructs the Association Agreement as another instance of Brussels subjugating Ukraine, Georgia or Moldova, while the annexation of Crimea and military conflict in eastern parts of Ukraine is projected as a rebellion against this alien agenda imposed by the West. "The developments in Ukraine are neither separation nor annexation of one state's territory by another, but rather, all these represent part of global civilizational struggles" (ibid, p. 40).

This narrative subverts the dominant discourse and offers its own "regime of truth," subsequently, supporting alternative foreign policy goals.

As the political crisis and subsequent developments in Ukraine were linked with president at the time Yanukovych's refusal to proceed with the signature of the Association Agreement with the European Union, it was echoed in debates in Georgia as well. Euro-sceptic political or societal groups construct these documents as giving an unfair advantage to Brussels and not actually delivering any of those benefits, the liberal narrative speaks about. For instance, Nana Devdariani, who served as a Human Rights' Ombudsman between the years 2000–2003 and briefly as the head of the Central Election Commission of Georgia in 2003. Devdariani She has her own column in "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" where she heavily criticizes the political elite's pro-European aspirations. In connection with the Association Agreement, her article was titled "The Truth about the Association Agreement with the EU" (Devdariani, 2014). There are several overarching points, which run in the background of the whole text and the general narrative. One is that the agreement is giving an unfair advantage to the European Union. Secondly, European standards are too expensive and difficult for Georgian producers to meet. In contrast to that, the Russian market is presented as an alternative. This construction revolves around the idea that as the former is unfamiliar with Georgian products, demand is too

low. While among Russians, who have been familiar with the goods produced in this region since the Soviet times, demand is really high. The purpose of my study is not to engage in detailed analysis to verify the numbers provided in these texts. Instead, I am focusing on how the arguments are constructed on the linguistic level. Thirdly, in this Self, the Soviet Union/Russia juxtaposition with the European Union as the Other, is extended to almost every other policy. In regard to the prospect of visa-free travel, Devdariani's text argues that rich people had no problem with traveling to Schengen countries regardless, while most Georgians would not be able to afford it, even if there was no visa requirement. In other words, there are no real, substantial benefits for Georgia from the Association Agreement, while Brussels gets all the advantages.

One important pattern that was apparent while conducting this analysis is that this articulation does not reject the West altogether, but instead differentiates between "true Europe" and "perverted" Europe which "abandoned true Christian values." This is especially the case with media texts, where I encountered many instances of references to political groups which are skeptical of the European Union, NATO, and liberal values.

The Georgian Orthodox Church is heavily involved in the reproduction of identity discourse. Especially conservative groups within the religious institution who are notorious for their Euro-skeptic narrative and criticism of liberal values. One such group which especially stands out is "Martmadidebel Mshobelta Kavshiri" (MMK) which in translation means the Union of Orthodox Parents, and I will be using the English translation of the name of the organization in this research. Priests and secular figures associated with the Union are known for their heavy criticism of the European Union and the United States, accusing them of conspiring against "traditional values" and the GOC as the defender of those values. At the same time, while the West is portrayed as perverted and Godless, Russia is juxtaposed as the opposite. The Orthodox Christian northern neighbor is articulated as closer to Georgia's Self, sharing history, certain canonical elements and most importantly, mutual aversion towards the value-system coming from the west. Davit Kvlividze is one such conservative hardliner clergyman associated with the Union of Orthodox Parents and an outspoken critic of pro-western foreign policy. In 2016, in an interview with "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" ("What Kind of Historical…", 2016) he made several remarks that illustrate the logic behind the articulation.

> The European Union is dismantling and where are they [Georgian government] going? Or what kind of historical choice are we talking about, which Georgian king was called the king of Europe? … let us move later, to the nineteenth century, when Georgia joined Russia and Georgians got the European look, from where did they get? – from Petersburg. … Today, talking about this is considered shameful, you say something, somebody will appear and call you a Russian spy, it is interesting to know whose spies they are themselves…

There is a lot to unpack in this extract. Firstly, the EU, according to this discourse, is struggling itself. "Godless and perverted" Brussels is losing its popularity, while "defenders of true family values" i.e. radical-right political groups are becoming increasingly popular. Secondly, it is deliberately faking history, as if there was such a title as the "king of Europe" Georgian monarchs could have carried if they were truly Europeans. Thirdly, in contrast to the dominant and widely accepted historical narrative in Georgian society that Georgian kingdoms were annexed by the Russian empire in the 19th century, he uses the term "joining" which turns this into a voluntary action from the Georgian side, exonerating Russia. Fourthly, it does not deny that Europe was the source of progress but argues that only through incorporation into the empire, this progress came to South Caucasus. And finally, this articulation is turning the label of "Russian spy" in stigma theory terms, into a "badge of honor" while at the same time, turning the table on them. The last sentence in this extract from the interview hints at the political elite acting as spies for the European Union or the West in general.

The Conclusion of the visa-free travel agreement with the European Union for Georgia took a bit longer than expected. The reason was mostly due to the prolonged work among the member states on putting a suspension mechanism in place. Logically the delay served as good material for populist discourse to further advance anti-EU sentiment. An article published by "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" in December 2016 argued that contemporary Europe where the "LGBT Sodomite flag is flying" is not the same as the Europe Georgia was seeking protection from, as the latter was based on "Christian values" and "crusaders' flag was flying in that Europe" (Zhvania, 2016). Furthermore, the text argues that the true reason why the Georgian political elite is so worried about the delayed conclusion of visa-free travel negotiations is that

> today, in the society, anti-western sentiments are growing with geometric pro-gression. Day by day more people understand that modern Europe, is not our choice, neither culturally nor mentally, and even if we were invited to the European Union, a Georgian man has nothing to do there (ibid).

In other words, what this text tries to conceive is that modern Europe is not culturally or mentally close to the Georgian Self and the political establishment is trying to promote this foreign policy despite the increased alienation in the society.

When visa-free travel with the European Union finally became a reality in 2017, in contrast to the liberal narrative which constructed it as one more fundamental step on the long journey of "returning home," populist discourse tried to downplay it. Bakur Svanidze, another regular contributor to the news-paper "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" characterized the celebration of visa libera-lization as fake and a deliberate deception from the government (Svanidze, 2017). In order to illustrate the point, the text draws a parallel with the work of Akaki Tsereteli (a Georgian poet from the 19th century). To be more exact,

Tsereteli wrote a poem titled "A Bat." It is a fictional story about the origin of bats and revolves around one arrogant mouse who is jealous of birds and asks God for wings. Despite his wish being granted, birds refuse to accept it as one of their kind and other mice refuse to take the transformed mouse back. Bakur Svanidze in his column compares those Georgians who express the excitement of the visa-free travel to this mouse who got wings but was never accepted by birds and nor could go back to its true form. The text argues that it concerns those Georgians who "with a happy cry run towards Europe, and even more, reject Georgianness! – as if, I am not like my fellow t Georgians, I am a different Georgian to other Georgians, to be more precise, with a European spirit…"

Furthermore, the text argues that the political establishment is promoting fake Europeans by focusing on things like littering in the streets or stopping a car at the pedestrian zebra crossing and not on the European level of pensions or workers' rights and safety. Svanidze relates this to the poem about the bat by comparing it to those Georgians who look down at most Georgians as uncivilized and barbaric i.e. un-European. The second aspect which is used to downplay the importance of the agreement is that it is not really a visa-free trip since you are required to have insurance, a return ticket and other similar documents in order to travel.

This column of Svanidze was met with criticism and discussed on social media. As a response, he published a follow-up article in the next week (2017b). This time in his column he criticizes overly excited Facebook posts devoted to the experiences of Georgian citizens crossing the Schengen border without thea need to present a visa. He labels them as "new Georgians" and accuses them of "provincial" behavior towards Europe. "Those who are "attracted to Europe" call us to be proud, not of our nation, our culture, our Georgianness, but of the fact that European border guards treat us as humans and are smiling to us" (ibid).

As I have mentioned many times already, an analysis of the texts revealed a juxtaposition between LGBTQ rights and conservative values in the West vs. Russia dichotomy. A 2017 opinion piece by its regular contributor Mkheidze (2017) in "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" argues that this is a conspiracy of the "neoliberal ruling elites of the West" who failed to impose their "agenda of same-sex marriages" on Muslim and orthodox Christian countries. "There is no talk about same-sex marriages so far and will not be (?) until there exists orthodox Russia's greatest and richest Church, the uncontested leader of the Orthodox world" (ibid).

The Russian Orthodox Church is just one part of what this text is articulating as the defense mechanism against the "same-sex marriage threat". This opinion piece speaks positively of "sovereign democracy," the concept, which is used to describe Putin's Russia, especially the first period of his presidency. In this article, it is described as the tool, which lets the Russian political elite oppose the western value-system, especially since the latter is so alien to orthodox Christian countries.

> The European Court dared to tell big Russia – you are limiting freedom of expression and discriminating and to us, small Georgia, cannot it do whatever it wishes?! … In order for this not to happen, we should go back into orthodox Russia's orbit, and if not, let somebody else show me another way… (ibid).

In other words, what this text suggests is that orthodox Christianity is in opposition to neoliberal value systems and even more importantly, aligning with Russia represents a defense against this "threat" to national identity.

One interesting detail is that despite the Alliance of Patriots of Georgia being closely associated with this network of media and NGO groups, as well as the texts very often interdiscursively and intertextually being connected to each other, the official party program's take on NATO and the European Union is not that radical. The text "Our Vision and Program" published on the website of the party, argues that they do not necessarily oppose membership in any of the organizations:

> However, according to the statements of NATO member countries, there are several reasons why NATO is not able to accept us today. It is painful to acknowledge this fact, but when NATO member countries state that we are far from joining its membership ranks at this time because Georgia doesn't meet certain political, economic and other requirements for integration into NATO, we understand this reality. Unlike other political parties though, we will neither deceive ourselves nor mislead Georgian society. This is because we consider the creation and promotion of unrealistic and false expectations among our population to be wrong and dishonest ("Our Vision and Program," n.d.).

And because of this "reality", the Alliance argues for more "patriotic" policies, which imply putting Georgia's interests as a priority.

> However, when more than 30,000 Turks are provided with Georgian citizenship, this is not the usual chatter, but the protection of Turkish geopolitical interests and an indication of a conflict against our state.
> When the Kodori Gorge is declared to be part of Upper Abkhazia, this is not the usual chatter, but the protection of Russian geopolitical interests and conflict with Georgia. When Georgia is forced to support Palestine at the United Nations (UN), that's the protection of Western interests, and not of Georgian interests. Therefore, to the contrary, we should protect Georgian interests everywhere! (ibid).

The Vision and Program of the party speaks with other texts I have covered in this chapter by repeating the key theme that the Georgian political elite serves the interests of the West and not of Georgia. It also repeats the narrative that same-sex marriages and LGBTQ rights are strangers to Georgian culture and are being imposed externally by the West. Georgian political elite meantime is sidelining "true national interests" and serve the agenda of globalization.

This narrative also resonates with the self-colonization discourse I discussed in the first empirical chapter.

In 2013 "Asaval-Dasavali" published an interview with opposition politician Kakha Kukava, where he argued that NATO, would not in fact, provide any real democratic boost for Georgia.

> Georgian people have to know well, that NATO is not a guarantor of democracy in Georgia. On the contrary, membership in NATO for Georgia means becoming a satellite dependent on the empire and it is impossible to build democracy in a non-independent and non-sovereign country! (Kukava, 2013).

This passage also demonstrates how discourse changes the meanings of such words as democracy or sovereignty since true democracy is defined differently by pro- and anti-NATO discourses.

5.4 The Baltics

In the theoretical part of this thesis, I introduced the concept of nesting orientalism, which in the literature describes gradation, the spectrum of the East at Europe's eastern border. In the first empirical chapter, I touched upon the importance of the Central and Eastern European countries for the Georgian political elite – as an example, the model of transformation to aspire to. Transformation not only in purely technical terms, but in the sense of "becoming European," "coming back home" and hence, moving Europe even closer and deeper into the territories of what used to be the Soviet Union. Especially important in this regard are the three Baltic republics (Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia) for no other reason than they were actually part of the USSR, not just satellite states. This makes the case of the Baltics especially compelling for the dominant discourse to make their case stronger. By referring to the fact that despite the history of the Soviet occupation Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia managed to return back to Europe, the hegemonic conception of Georgian national identity sets it as an example to aspire to.

Similarly, the Baltics is an important reference point for populist discourse, as it is an example of the Euro-Atlantic integration in the neighborhood. But there is the key difference between the liberal and populist articulations. Empirical data collected for the study of populist discourse reveals that the current state of Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania is described as worse rather than better, reporting a decrease in population, mass emigration, etc. It tries to project the message that EU and NATO membership brought worse than good to those countries.

This is an important dimension, which I believe needs to be explored in detail. Therefore, I decided to devote this small subchapter only to the construction of the Baltics in the populist discourse. For instance, in June 2009, "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" published the article "What Happened to the Baltics under NATO" (2009). The text claims that although most of the negative expectations of Russians did not come true, there is a danger of the Baltics becoming a store of illegal armaments, as they have not signed the Treaty on

Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. Furthermore, the publication suggests that the purpose of the membership was to help those republics better integrate ethnic Russian minorities as well as reduce aggressive rhetoric, however

> Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia could not betray old complexes and continued claiming that the unconsidered politics of the Kremlin is still a threat, while NATO membership provides the only guarantee of safety since in case of conflict with Russia they hope for the alliance's help (ibid).

Dissecting this passage reveals some important points. Firstly, attitudes of the Baltics towards Russia are described as "old complexes" while NATO assistance in case of an attack is not portrayed as something certain, but rather as something that the Baltics would hope for.

As the publication continues discussing the Baltics "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" heavily relies on Russian sources and publishes unchecked information borrowed from those online or printed media sources. For instance, in 2013, an article was published, taken from the Russian website nakanune.ru which argues that the Baltics represent banana republics of Europe ("Banana Republics…", 2013). The text discusses the case of Lithuania and suggests that the leadership of the country takes direct orders from the White House. The relationship between the Baltic country and the United States is presented as if it were a metropole/colony dependency.

In 2015 "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" published an interview with the author of the book "Europe's Backyard: Why the Baltic States are Dying Out" (2015). Nosovich, i.e. the author of the book is a Russian political scientist who heavily criticizes the policies of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania and reproduces Russian state narratives. In an interview with the Georgian newspaper, he painted a rather a gloomy picture of the Baltics. He describes them as some of the poorest countries, which are experiencing extremely high levels of depopulation. The Baltics, according to Nosovich, can be said to be characterized with ideological radicalism i.e. rejecting the Soviet past as occupation and equating Communist crimes with those of Nazi Germany. Furthermore, what one needs to pay attention to is how the meanings of certain well-established concepts are changed and redefined. He suggests that freedom of speech, democracy or a multiparty parliament are illusionary in the case of the Baltic republics, as every third inhabitant is deprived of his or her basic constitutional rights. (meaning holders of grey passports, or Russian citizens living in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania). Finally, he suggests that the aim of his publication is to give a certain "warning" to others i.e. to Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine that "the Baltic way – is only an attempt to create a certain European façade" (ibid).

This one sentence I believe very nicely summarizes how the whole narrative is constructed – promises of the good life in the European Union are just a myth, while in reality, they get depopulation, economic and social problems, and a lower quality of life, than during the Soviet Union (ibid).

In November 2012, opposition politicians, economists and experts from the Baltic countries were invited to Tbilisi to attend a conference hosted by the Institute of Eurasia. The aim of the event was to provide Georgian society with the "real" information about how membership in NATO and the EU has "limited their sovereignty," and that it is not too different from Soviet times. As the report on the activities of the Institute claims, in order to show to Georgians that "not only provocateurs live in the Baltics, but objective and well-wishers to Georgia as well" (Eurasian Institute, 2014, p. 9).

So there are two separate Baltics, the one which is "true" and is committed to its true identity and the one which has been misled by the European Union and NATO and hence, is facing "terrible consequences" be it either increased migration, dependency on the west or "loss of sovereignty." After being constituted this way, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are set as an example and warning for Georgia, of what the Euro-Atlantic foreign policy could mean for the country.

5.5 Neutral Georgia

As participation in the various NATO and the EU-led military or civilian missions around the globe is an important reference point for the liberal narrative, it is logical to expect that the counter-narrative engages in discrediting this process and constructing it as simply Georgian soldiers being sacrificed for the interests of the West and not Georgia's. Support from the United States or Brussels, as illustrated in this small extract from an opinion piece published in "Sakartvelo da Msoflio," is regarded by populist discourse as "nothing but certain gratefulness for sending 2000 Georgian soldiers to Afghanistan. Only that we send our soldiers there and so they will call us not just a beacon of democracy, but a shining star" (Giorgidze, 2010).

"Sakartvelo da Msoflio" published an interview with expert on security politics Irakli Sesiashvili, titled "Irakli Sesiashvili Names Three Reasons Why NATO would not Dare to Accept Georgia Among Its Members" (2012). He lists as those reasons that there are two conflict zones in Georgia, that NATO would not go to war with Russia over Georgia and that the latter participates and contributes to NATO missions anyway. The last point is of special interest in this thesis, as it is one of the examples of how the narrative against participating in missions in Afghanistan or Iraq is articulated. More specifically, it is projected as not serving the country's national interests but rather as trying to please the West. "Many soldiers agree on going to Afghanistan not because as Saakashvili says [president at the time] they are protecting Georgia, but because of financial interests" (ibid) – hinting at the difficult economic situation in the country.

In an interview, he emphasized that even the NATO officials are surprised by such devotion and commitment from such a small country as Georgia and argues that the government should be serving national interests rather than a

narrow political one i.e. pleasing western allies. An interesting detail should be noted here. Interestingly, Irakli Sesiashvili became an MP for the ruling party Georgian Dream after the 2012 parliamentary elections and, at the time of writing this thesis, still holds this position. While in the government, his narrative about contributing to NATO missions has drastically changed and is more in line with the dominant discourse.

The whole premise of the neutral Georgia narrative is constructed on the belief that the west and especially the United States of America is not willing to risk its own safety and welfare for the sake of Georgia. It attempts to establish a regime of truth in which the South Caucasus is constructed as different and a stranger to the west, while Russia is the true protector of the region. Any military or political tensions Georgia might have with its northern neighbor, according to this narrative, is to be blamed on the former's melding with North Atlantic Treaty Organization i.e. the Other. To providea an example, "Sakart-velo da Msoflio" published a letter of historian Givi Gureshidze "Oh, This Dreamy NATO!..." (2012) where the author argues that "As a result of objecti-vely formed geopolitical laws, NATO is not suitable for the Caucasus. If Armenians and Azeris understood these laws, what has happened to us?" (ibid).

The demand for neutrality is made to sound more legitimate by referring to the Orthodox Church and the patriarch himself, who, as the text suggests, in 2001 claimed that neutrality is the most desired position / status for a small country like Georgia.

Finally, the letter suggests that: "Will the USA, which dissolved Yugoslavia into seven states, unite Georgia? Do not hope that the USA and its NATO will wrestle Russia for this reason" (ibid).

An interesting detail in this passage is that NATO is presented as belonging to the United States, as a US organization rather than an alliance of sovereign states.

Opposition to NATO membership is not articulated only through the references to the death toll among soldiers and civilization. It also relied on turning existing breakaway regions into a false dilemma i.e. an either/or situation. Membership into Euro-Atlantic institutions is constructed as a threat to territorial integrity and proceeding with this policy would result in the loss of those territories for good. This thesis reappears in several texts under examination. In April 2013's issue of "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" an interview with the chairman of "Rights' Defenders Union," Nikoloz Mzhavanadze was published. This is another interesting example of how the meaning changes according to articulation – the notion of a human right's activist. People publicly promoting xenophobia, or homophobia on behalf of saving traditional family values, project themselves as human rights' activists. In other words, meanings change according to articulations, and words like democracy or freedom of expression are redefined within the discursive constructions. This narrative argues that pro-western foreign policy endangers the territorial integrity of the country, while what Georgia receives in return is not enough. "Our alliance with NATO is limited only in that we are sending the biggest

number of troops to the hot spots. While we do not receive any offer from NATO in return" ("Nikoloz Mzhavanadze: …", 2013), argues the so-called human rights' activist and claims that the political elite endangers the territorial integrity of Georgia for nothing in return. This dichotomy of either NATO or territorial integrity is very heavily employed by the actors behind this discourse. This discourse constructs neutral Georgia as the only solution to the questions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to illustrate how the populist narrative articulates national identity. I label it as an exclusive conception of national identity. It is exclusive, as it stems from the formula Georgian = orthodox Christian and excludes representatives of other religious or ethnic groups despite their citizenship. This equation constitutes a nodal point which defines how populism interprets the Soviet legacy, Stalin, foreign policy or the current state of the Baltic republics. The nodal point of orthodox Christianity constitutes the European Union, the United States, NATO, and the West in general as the constitutive Other, and as the enforcers and imposers of alien, foreign values. Orthodox Christian Russia on the other hand, is constituted as closer to Georgia's Self. Norms of membership based on religious and ethnic elements constructs a dichotomy of "the people" vs. other members of the same state (non-orthodox Georgians, Azeri and Armenian ethnic minorities, etc.) thus making this discourse populist. The social purpose of such a national identity conception, as the empirics have illustrated, is the spread of conservative and "traditional values" in opposition to dominant foreign policy discourse. Relational meaning is constructed as "true Christian values" vis-à-vis the "perverted" and "godless" West. Finally, a cognitive worldview or the image of national identity in space and time belongs to the civilizational model led by the Russian Orthodox Church. This became especially apparent after Putin's return to the presidency in 2012 and the discourse of the political elite took a distinctly conservative turn.

This possibility of constructing alternative/parallel conceptions of national identity on this nexus is facilitated by the liminal positioning of Georgia. As Europe's eastern border remains under constant making, there is no clear answer as to whether Georgian society belongs to the West or to the East. This in-betweenness implies that the country could be in and out of what is understood to be Europe, and the status depends on the articulation. While in the previous chapter I focused on studying how pro-EU and NATO foreign policies are in a mutually constitutive relationship with the liberal articulation of national identity, this chapter was devoted to the alternative positioning of liminality, which I labeled as populist. I chose the term as this particular discourse is clearly anti-establishment and anti-elitist. It appeals to the masses and to the people while openly opposing immigration and the protection of

minority rights. Additionally, these groups engage in the reproduction of conspiracy theories. Liberals, Soros, Freemasons, LGBTQ lobby, etc. are plotting against the orthodox Christian civilization and so-called "traditional" values.

The empirical data mostly comprised of two, widely distributed newspapers "Sakartvelo da Msoflio" and "Asaval-Dasavali", texts by Alliance of Patriots of Georgia and the Institute of Eurasia. These actors are intertextually and interdiscursively related to each other and make up the large network behind the articulation.

The findings can be summarized into key five categories: a) orthodox Christian = Georgian equation is the nodal point, which fixes the meaning of other floating signifiers and (re)produces identity/foreign policy relationship. b) The second aspect of the findings illustrated how the legacy of Communism is interpreted and tackled from this chain of significations. The result is a very positive portrayal of the Soviet rule and the paradoxical image of Stalin as an orthodox Christian. c) This equation, as western Europe is predominantly non-orthodox Christian, populist articulation represents the former as strange and alien to Georgia. Reform agendas coming from Brussels are seen as externally imposed and alien. d)The fourth aspect which became apparent in my analysis is that the Baltics are referred to as an example of the EU and NATO's "destructive" policies. They are portrayed as less sovereign and independent than when they were under Soviet rule. e) Finally, the texts also illustrated that populist articulations views on contributing to international military missions are very negative and constructed as being a sacrifice for nothing.

These five aspects are just some of many major themes which combine together to form the populist articulation of the foreign policy/identity constitutive relationship. Thus, we can summarize it in the following manner:

	Identity narratives	Implications
Liberal (inclusive)	Transformation; Bridge between Europe and Asia; Belonging to the West;	Participation in international military missions; decommunization; The Baltics as examples to aspire to; Other post-Soviet countries as more backward; Russia as the constitutive other.
Populist (exclusive)	Georgian = Orthodox Christian; Neither Europe nor Asia;	The West as the constitutive other; The Baltics as a negative example; Orthodox Russia as "big brother"; Neutral Georgia; Threats posed by multiculturalism and globalization.

Figure 8. Summary of empirical analysis:

CONCLUSION

The starting point of my research was the societies in between the European Union and Russia and the subsequent insecurity on the broader east/west nexus. What are the possible identity/foreign policy trajectories that are constituted with such positionings? How do these discursive struggles play out in daily practices? What are the meanings attached to the dates on which Christmas or Victory Day are celebrated? How is it possible that a controversial depiction of the European Union as the march of progress (Fig. 5) could become the winner of the competition and be shared publicly on the Facebook page of a governmental institution? How could Stalin become the key symbol of the populist narrative articulated around orthodox Christianity and be juxtaposed against liberal democracy? How could we explain such discrepancy between the elites in Brussels and Georgia on what to expect from the Eastern Partnership and the meanings attached to the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement? What is the West as reproduced in the peripheries vis-à-vis the constructed in the "center"?

In order to go beyond traditional positivist thinking while trying to answer these questions, I have applied to the case study of Georgia a theoretical and methodological framework combining liminality, self-colonization and discourse theory. The concept of liminality comes from cultural anthropology in order to conceptualize Georgia as a society in-between. In contrast to either-or, being torn between the two is the state itself. The position of going through the transition – abandoning the old Self but yet, not having completed the process of transformation/of becoming 'fully European'.

The case study of Georgia contributes to the application of liminality in International Relations in several important ways. The prospect of EU enlargement in the region is relatively low, political elites in Brussels do not expect to integrate Georgia, Ukraine or Moldova anytime soon. However, as I have illustrated in my empirical analysis, Euro-Atlantic integration remains the cornerstone of the dominant foreign policy/national identity constitution unfolding in the Caucasus. The resulting cultural and political context requires deeper engagement through the application of liminality, self-colonization and stigma theory. Focus on one single case reveals important differences within the countries and societies located between the two civilizational poles as well as a retrospective understanding of the evolution of discursive constructions.

The poststructuralist school, in contrast to traditional approaches to International Relations, which take the state as a unitary actor or conventional constructivists who accept the possibility of a state's pre-social core identity, argues that the state's identity is the outcome of exclusionary practices. As it involves boundary producing and reproduction of the "inside/outside" divide, foreign policy is central to the state's identity (Campbell, 1992: 68). It provides a relational construction of identity and thus helps to uncover the discursive processes behind the concepts taken for granted by realists or constructivists.

Hence, the application of a postpositivist research design was more appropriate in addressing the goals that were set out in this study.

Essentially, there is one Georgia – liminal, and different political actors articulate different, and in some cases, mutually exclusive Georgian national identities, based on the foreign policy they want to promote. Poststructuralism, unlike realism or conventional constructivism, allows a deeper analysis of meaning production processes and linguistic play behind the concepts taken as objective and natural facts.

Furthermore, poststructuralist ontology treats the concept of discourse not as equivalent to ideas, but rather as incorporating both material and ideational factors (Hansen, 2006: 10). Discourse theory also does not distinguish between discursive and non-discursive phenomena (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 34). This allowed me to expand and enrich the empirical data and examine the meaning production behind instances seemingly unrelated to foreign policy. For example, discussions around celebrating Christmas on 25th December or Victory Day on 8th May, as the focus of my study was not only on the terms "pro-Western foreign policy" or "pro-Russian", but rather how they are linked to other signs and how competing articulations differ around the same terms. This further justifies the selection of discourse theory as the main guiding ontological and epistemological toolkit. Such a research design allows the accommodation of an examination of how the opposing discourse, which aims to bring forth a different policy, does so by rearticulating national identity.

These variances in foreign policy narratives come into play as a result of the various actors acting differently based on this liminal positioning. For analytical purposes, I pin these multiple dimensions down to the two basic narratives: liberal and populist. Another way to conceptualize these two articulations could be inclusive and exclusive national identity discourses. The former does not limit the idea of what it means to be a Georgian to race, ethnicity or religion, but to citizenship. Exclusive articulation on the other hand, excludes all non-orthodox Christians despite their ethnicity or mother tongue. It revolves around the formula Georgian = orthodox Christian and it cannot be any other way. As I have demonstrated in the second empirical chapter of this thesis, this chain of signifiers explains how paradoxical images such as Stalin the believer could emerge in public discourses. Articulations or discursive constructions themselves I have conceptualized as self-colonization, which is an academic concept applied to those societies, which have discovered themselves to be not as "backward" as the former colonies, but at the same time, are not part of the West. In order to "correct," or "make up," for this discrepancy, those societies engage in the tactics of voluntarily adopting and implementing western standards. These discursive processes imply recognition of western superiority and self-stigmatization. This relationship is postcolonial as it cannot be defined with any pre-given criteria. Postcolonial is rather situational and relational (Morozov, 2015, p. 9). Examining discourse on national identity from civilizational and self-colonization narratives allowed me to study not only the language which reforms are embedded in, but also "how perceptions of

civilizational identity are interwoven with local, regional, and global political discourses" (O'Hagan, 2007, pp. 21–22). How do the liminal actors locate themselves? How do they evaluate others and asses themselves as superior, inferior or the equal vis-à-vis the Other? Such civilizational discourse and belonging can illustrate that the Self can be constructed as both inferior and as identical to the pole of attraction. This was the case for the Central European countries after the collapse of the USSR, as Europe was constructed as superior to their Self, but simultaneously those discourses pointed to the instances of their own Europeaness making them at the same time both European and also not fully so (Hansen, 2006: 40).

Both liberal and populist conceptions of the Self engage in such tactics. However, whether the pole of attraction lies in Moscow or in Brussels constitutes the difference in articulations of national identity. Additionally, one more theoretical framework I have employed in order to study identity constructions in the countries of the EaP is discourse theory. The latter is especially important as it also guides the methodological framework of my research. I have used poststructuralist discourse theory's key notions of nodal points, empty signifiers, and chains of significations in order to examine how narratives are constructed and how discourses delimit what can be uttered and what counts as irrational.

The data which I have examined while conducting this research can be divided into two groups. One so-called dominant, pro-European discourse was mostly composed of official documents, president's annual addresses and bills, while the challenging populist articulation was mostly derived from widely read newspapers "Sakarvelo da Msoflio" and "Asaval-Dasavali," as well as certain texts produced by the political groups and NGOs associated with this discourse.

The findings of my study illustrate how various actors act upon liminal positioning and constitute foreign policy trajectories according to identity articulations and the other way around. Poststructuralist discourse analysis of texts (in the broader meaning of this word) revealed how certain policies and practices are made possible through such discursive constructions.

The key findings can be summarized as the following: firstly, there is a discrepancy between the Georgian ruling political elites and Brussels on what to make of the AA and DCFTA with the European Union. While in the case of latter we can speak of institutional identity transfer, for officials in Tbilisi it is similar to "the journey" of the CEE countries. The end goal of the partnership should be membership. This idea of "returning back home" drives self-colonization tactics. Reform agendas are guided by the idea of "becoming more civilized," transforming oneself and "making up" for what had been lost due to the Soviet occupation. Contribution to NATO-led missions is articulated as Georgia being on the same side with the West i.e. where does the country naturally belong. In contrast, populist discourse articulates the pole of attraction as Moscow and as a result, opposes sending troops to Afghanistan, as it is the "war of strangers." In a similar manner, if for liberal discourse the Baltics are constructed as the role model for Georgia to aspire to, the populist narrative

imagines the region as devastated by the EU and NATO membership. Furthermore, I have demonstrated in this thesis how this competition over the meanings extends to the interpretation of recent history, addressing the Soviet legacy. One key difference between liberal and populist discourses is that the latter constructs a conspiracy theory type of narrative with liberals, Free Masons or Zionists plotting against orthodox Christian Georgia. Some texts revealed that in such discursive constructions even McDonald's or just a cheeseburger is perceived as a threat to the Self.

Speaking of the populist articulation, it is important to emphasize that there is no single specific policy articulation that would qualify a certain discourse as a populist. There are two elements (anti-elitism and demand for popular sovereignty), that constitute a skeleton, so to speak, around which the populist articulation takes shape. This analytical framework helps to understand and explain why various actors with various foreign policy trajectories still fall under the umbrella of populism. Populist articulation of Georgian identity does not necessarily equal anti-Western sentiments, but as the political elite has been committed to the Euro-Atlantic foreign policy, skepticism of the former puts populists at odds with the dominant narrative.

Based on the empirical findings I concluded that populism in Georgia consists of three major trends:

1. "Pragmatic" pro-Western foreign policy (NATO and the European Union are good, but they are never going to accept Georgia while this puts relations with Russia in jeopardy);
2. "Perverted West" vs. "the real West" i.e. liberalism and multiculturalism juxtaposed with conservatism and so-called traditional values.
3. Pro-Russian foreign policy (the EU and NATO are strangers to Georgia's Self while orthodox Russia is closer). Furthermore, what I discovered is that they are not exclusive, and, in many instances, these three trends intersect. This explains why the Alliance of Patriots on the one hand calls for neutrality and Georgia's rejection of NATO, but at the same time, on their party program they put the membership in the latter as a foreign policy goal.

The focus of my research was intentionally on populist narrative and thus the three elements listed above are derived from concrete empirics analyzed within this dissertation. However, these findings do not exclude the existence of Eurosceptic or conservative discourses on national identity/foreign policy which neither qualify as liberals and nor as populist.

The empirical findings of this study are useful for future research in several ways. I believe that while studying the common neighborhood, we need to further expand our analytical focus from Brussels to the countries of the Eastern Partnership themselves. According to Freedom House (2018), for the second year in a row, the nations in transit have experienced a decline of democracy scores. Instead of the "ring of friends," the European Union envisioned, countries in the immediate neighborhood remain stuck in political instabilities and military conflicts, as is the case for Ukraine or Georgia. Examining the

narratives taking shape in public discourses of those societies helps to better understand the effects so-called institutional identity transfer has on the countries of Eastern Partnership. This shift of focus, furthermore, helps to analyze more deeply the ongoing tendencies and trends in the nations in transit.

Focusing on national identity discourses and their mutual constitution of foreign policy of such 'minor' actors in international politics contributes to broadening the research agenda of International Relations and helps to go beyond Eurocentric approaches. It assumes the centrality of Europe in human past and present, although 'Europe' is not fixed in a social, political, cultural or geographical sense (Barkawi & Laffey, 2006, pp. 331). Whether it is realism with its focus on great powers, liberalism's interest in international institutions or constructivists trying to make sense of international politics in Kantian, Lockean or Hobbesian terms, they are guided by Eurocentric assumptions. In other words, the categories of analysis that are "derived from great power politics in the North" (ibid, p. 332). My study on the other hand, reveals the importance of 'peripheral' actors for global security architecture by examining reflections of 'great power politics' in meaning-making articulations of the former. Whereas in Central and Eastern Europe, a cluster of countries were joining NATO and the European Union at the same time, the situation further to the east is far more complicated. It is hard to speak of the aligning foreign policy trajectories of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia resulting in the failure to form the South Caucasus as a region in anything but purely geographic terms. Thus, the single-case study of Georgia illustrates the ramifications of 'great power politics' and how it translates into national identity discourses of the states in-between. This study highlights how ontologically insecure states address their insecurity and position themselves at the East/West nexus, considering the existing ambiguity about the limits of the West.

Another possible future implication of this study is researching the region of the South Caucasus and possibly conducting a comparative study between Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. What are the different foreign policy discourses and national identity conceptions each country has, despite having the same geographical location (liminal positioning)? Future research could take this further by studying to what extent, and how much, civilizational discourse is present in foreign policy discussions in these countries.

Future studies could also address the limitations of this thesis. As I mostly focused on the dominant narrative on foreign policy, I did not cover other articulations that fall somewhere in-between the two poles. Some discourses articulate pro-Western foreign policy and at the same time reject fundamental rights for minorities that come along the membership in Euro-Atlantic institutions, or libertarians who want the EU membership but oppose any regulation coming from the state. The vast empirical data examined within the framework of this dissertation illustrates that there are a lot of spaces that need to be addressed by future research.

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Appendix A

The list of texts analyzed:

Inauguration speech of the president		
Shevardnadze		2000
Saakashvili		2004; 2008
Margvelashvili		2014
Documents		
Georgia and the World: A Vision and Strategy for the Future		2000
National Security Concept of Georgia		2005
Foreign Policy Strategy of Georgia 2006–2009		2006
Liberty Charter 2011		2011
Resolution on Georgia's Foreign Policy Adopted by the Parliament		2013; 2016; 2017
Joint Statement of Parliament of Georgia, Parliament of Republic of Moldova, Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine		2017
Newspapers		
"კვირის პალიტრა"	"Kviris Palitra"	1999–2017
"საქართველოს რესპუბლიკა"	"Sakartvelos Respublika"	1999–2017
"ასავალ-დასავალი"	"Asaval-Dasavli"	1999–2017
"საქართველო და მსოფლიო"	"Sakartvelo da Msoflio	2009–2017
TV Shows		
„ნატო აქაურობას"	"May NATO Be Here"	2016
"#ძალა ევროპაშია"	"#Power is in Europe"	2016–2017

SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

"Kaukaasia kriidiring":
Gruusia minapilt ida/lääne neksuses

Selle uurimisprojekti lähtekohaks on ebaselgus, mis tuleneb liminaalsest posit-sioneerumisest kahe tsivilisatsioonilise projekti vahel. See „vahepealsus" või-maldab täiesti eriilmeliste, üksteisest sõltumatute pooluste üheaegset esinemist, nagu näiteks Stalin ja Euroopa Liit, vein ja kokteil või õlilamp ja elekter. Selles töös uuritakse, kuidas toimub rahvusliku identiteedi artikuleerimine skaala mõ-lemas otsas; kuidas need artikulatsioonid mõjutavad välispoliitika trajektoore ja on omakorda nendest mõjutatud. Uurimus järgib identiteedi ja välispoliitika suhete kontseptualiseerimist Hopfi (2005), Hanseni (2006) ja Hintzi (2016) töö-des, keskendudes sellele, kuidas liberaalsed ja populistlikud diskursiivsed konstruktsioonid aitavad mõtestada minapilti ida/lääne geopoliitilises neksuses.

Väitekirja keskseks uurimisküsimuseks on:
Kuidas on Gruusia liminaalne positsioneering artikuleeritud avalikus dis-kursuses, geograafilistel, kultuurilistel, ajaloolistel ja sotsiaalsetel asja-oludel põhinevalt?

Rida alaküsimusi aitab täiendavalt suunata selle uurimuse fookust välispoliitika ja identiteedi suhete osas:

- Milline on liminaalse identiteedi roll vastastikku välistavate rahvusliku iden-titeedi diskursuste (ehk liberaalse ja populistliku diskursuse) artikuleeri-misel? Kuidas vastustab populistlik diskursus dominantset liberaalset dis-kursust alternatiivse Gruusia rahvusliku identiteedi tootmise kaudu?
- Kuidas on välispoliitilised eesmärgid ja julgeolekuteemad seotud identiteedi-diskursustega ja kuidas toimub nende vastastikune (taas)tootmine?
- Kuidas mõjutab Euroopa Liidu naabruspoliitika liminaalsustunde püsimist ELi idapiiri taha jäävates riikides?

Doty (1993, 1996) eeskujul püstitatakse selles uurimuses *„miks"* küsimuste ase-mel *„kuidas võimalik"* küsimusi, mis teeb välispoliitika analüüsi tuumakamaks. Erinevalt teatud sotsiaalset ja diskursiivset tausta probleemivabalt käsitlevatest *„miks"* küsimustest, uurivad *„kuidas võimalik"* küsimused tähenduse tootmise protsesse ja püüavad seeläbi selgitada mitte seda, miks teatud tulemusele jõuti, vaid pigem seda, kuidas teemade ja objektide sotsiaalsed konstruktsioonid muu-davad teatud poliitikad ja praktikad võimalikuks. *„Kuidas võimalik"* küsimus-test lähtuvad analüüsid aitavad selgitada mitte ainult seda, kuidas sotsiaalseid identiteete konstrueeritakse, vaid ka seda, millised praktikad ja poliitikad muu-tuvad võimalikuks.

Vaatamata sellele, et uurimisprojekti näol on tegemist ühe juhtumi uuringu-ga, mis keskendub identiteedi konstrueerimise protsessidele Gruusias, on töösse

lisatud ka võrdluse element. Täpsemalt võimaldab valitud uurimisküsimuste kombinatsioon uurida kollektiivse identiteedi konstrueerimist erinevatest vaatenurkadest, läbi euroopalikkuse, kaukaasia, õigeusu või mõne muu prisma ja teha seda ajalisel teljel (perioodil 1999–2017). Säärane võrdlev disain ühe juhtumi uuringu raames võimaldab lahti harutada rahvusliku identiteedi pidevad muutused ja selle identiteedi ning välispoliitilise agenda omavahelised vastastikmõjud, mis neid muutusi juhivad. See uurimus panustab oluliste rahvusvaheliste suhete toimijate loodud välispoliitika instrumentide (nt Euroopa Liidu naabruspoliitika) mõju uurimisse väikestes perifeersetes riikides, mis on omakorda kahe erineva tsivilisatsioonilise pooluse mõjuväljas. Gruusia juhtumiuuring on oluline, sest see paljastab ebakõla mõlema poole poliitiliste eliitide nägemustes Idapartnerluse olulisuse osas või selles osas, milline võiks olla nende riikide ja Euroopa Liidu vaheliste suhete tulevik. See ebakõla muudabki nii Gruusia kui ka Moldova ja Ukraina – ehk riikide, mis on allkirjastanud assotsiatsioonilepingu Euroopa Liiduga – uurimise unikaalseks ja väärtuslikuks.

Lisaks võrdlevale perspektiivile Gruusia üksikjuhtumi raames on selle uurimuse tulemused olulised ka liminaalsuse-alase teadustöö edendamisel. Konkreetsemalt pakub veel ühe liminaalse juhtumi uurimine võimaluse laiendada selle regiooni geograafilist ulatust, milles paiknevaid riike on juba varasemalt liminaalsuse kontseptsiooni alusel analüüsitud (nt Rumeenia, Türgi, Ukraina, Poola, Balti riigid).

Kokkuvõtvalt on selle uurimuse panus kahetine. Ühelt poolt on eesmärgiks selliste kontseptsioonide nagu liminaalsus ja enesekolonisatsioon edasiarendamine ja teooria täiendamine identiteedi-alases teadustöös. See uurimus arendab argumentatsiooni, et liminaalne positsioon või kahevahel olek jätab Gruusia ühiskonna pidevasse siirdeseisundisse ja seeläbi jääb ühiskond alatiseks „poolvalmis" olekusse. Sellest tulenevalt on iga välispoliitika agenda, mille loomine põhineb identiteedidiskursustel, omakorda artikuleeritud nende positsioneeringute suhtes. Teiseks on selle töö eesmärgiks uurida Euroopa idee diskursiivset tootmist ja demonstreerida Gruusia „euroopastumise" varieeruvust aja jooksul. Selles uurimuses argumenteeritakse, et liminaalsete riikide poliitilistes diskursustes sõltub lääne kujutise taastootmine konkreetsetest eesmärkidest, mida poliitiline eliit saavutada üritab.

Seega on väitekirja põhiargument järgnev: *Gruusia liminaalne positsioneering lääne suhtes (mille all mõistetakse alalist eurooplaseks saamise olekut/ protsessi) põhjustab sotsiaalset antagonismi, kuna subjekti (st Gruusia rahvuslikku identiteeti) artikuleeritakse läbi erinevate diskursuste üksteist välistaval viisil.* Liminaalsus või vahepealsuses olemise seisund muutub seeläbi tühjaks tähistajaks, mille ümber need omavahel võistlevad diskursused tekivad. Näiteks liberaalse diskursuse jaoks on Venemaa olemuslikult „väljaspool". Nõukogude pärandit, mida Venemaaga seostatakse, kujutatakse kui midagi gruusia identiteedi jaoks võõrast, „Vene imperialismi" poolt pealesurutut. Samaaegselt omistab rahvusliku identiteedi alternatiivne diskursus sama „välise" rolli hoopis Läänele. (Taas)tootes kujundit Euroopast kui millestki erinevast, kui kogust, mis ei aktsepteeri Gruusiat kunagi võrdväärsena, muutub Venemaa oma õigeusu

ja ühise nõukogude minevikuga võrdväärsuse ahelate võtmeelemendiks diskursuses, mida selles uurimuses nimetatakse populistlikuks/välistavaks. Minapildi (ehk mida tähendab olla Gruusialane) liberaalne käsitus on inklusiivne/kaasav, kuna see ei ole piiritletud rahvuslike või religioossete elementidega ning põhineb kodakondsusel. Vastanduvalt on eksklusiivne/populistlik lähenemine rahvuslikule identiteedile välistav, sest tugineb olulisel määral võrdusele grusiin = õigeusklik, välistades igasugused muud etnilised või religioossed identiteedid.

Järgides uurimistöö raamistiku osas Hintzi (2016) eeskuju, käiakse selles uurimuses välja Gruusia rahvusliku identiteedi kahe kontseptsiooni – liberaalse ja populistliku ehk inklusiivse ja eksklusiivse – dekonstrueerimine neljaks komponendiks. See võimaldab paremini mõista identiteedi konstrueerimise alusprotsesse, andes meile ka analüütiliselt kasuliku tööriista suure koguse empiiriliste andmete nüansseeritud uurimiseks.

	Liberaalne/kaasav	Populistlik/välistav
Liikmelisuse tavad	Mitte-etniline, kodakondsuse-põhine rahvuslus. On omaks võtnud (vähemalt diskursiivsel tasandil) põhimõtted nagu individuaalsed vabadused, vabakaubandus, liberaalne immigratsioonipoliitika jne.	Etniline, usul põhinev liikmelisus. Vaenulik immigrantide suhtes. Hindab konservatiivseid ja „traditsioonilisi" väärtusi.
Sotsiaalne eesmärk	Euroopa normide ja standardite rakendamine	Konservatiivsete, lääne- ja globaliseerumisvastaste meeleolude levitamine
Tähenduslik suhestumine	Konstrueerib Euroopa loomupärase „koduna", kuhu Gruusia kuulub, võõristades Venemaad ja nõukogude minevikku.	Konstrueerib moodsat lääne tsivilisatsiooni perversse ja allakäinuna. Õigeusklik Venemaa kui loomulik liitlane. Idealiseerib nõukogude minevikku.
Kognitiivne maailmavaade	Näeb end moodsa, lääne tsivilisatsiooni loomupärase osana	Näeb end osana Venemaa poolt juhitud õigeusklikust maailmast

Teoreetiline raamistik

Liminaalsuse kontseptsiooni juured on antropoloogias. Arnold Van Gennep (1908; 1960), järeldas erinevate hõimude tseremooniaid jälgides, et riitustes, mis on seotud raseduse, kihlumise või pühendamisega, mängib siirde kontseptsioon võtmerolli. Ta jagas kõik üleminekuriitused kolme etappi: eelliminaalne, liminaalne ja postliminaalne. Liminaalsust karakteriseerivad spetsiifilise omandi, staatuse, sekulaarse rõivastuse, hõimluse jms puudumine, kuid sel on ka positiivseid aspekte. Just üleminek on oluliseks protsessiks, mis viib seda läbiva subjekti transformeerumise ja uuestisünnini. Liminaalsed kogud on olekus, mida võib kirjeldada kui „ei siin ega seal; nad on vahepealsed ja seaduse, tava, juurdunud kommete ning tseremoniaalsuse poolt määratud ning esitletud positsioonide vahel" (Turner, 1969: 95).

Selle kontseptsiooni rakendamisel ühiskonnale kui tervikule on üks oluline aspekt. Kui antropoloogilises kasutuses on liminaalsuse sisu selgesti piiritletud, nagu ka see, kuidas liminaalsesse seisundisse jõutakse ja sellest väljutakse ning on olemas kogenud „tseremooniameistrid", kelle ülesandeks on subjektide juhtimine läbi rituaalide, siis ühiskonnale rakendatuna need aspektid puuduvad.

Selles väitekirjas argumenteeritakse, et erinevad huvigrupid ekspluateerivad seda liminaalset ruumi, milles Gruusia ühiskond paikneb, erineval moel. Liberaalne narratiiv, positsioneerides liminaalsust lääne suhtes, omistab Gruusiale teise klassi ühiskonna staatuse ning püüdleb enesekolonisatsiooni suunas. Selle all mõistetakse lääne kultuurilise jõu ülemuslikkuse tunnustamist ja sellele alistumist, ilma et riiki tegelikult koloniseeritaks või muudetaks osaks koloniaalsüsteemist. Samaaegselt organiseerub populistlik diskursus samuti Gruusia liminaalse positsiooni ümber, kuid kasutab seda kontseptsiooni läänevastaste poliitikate edendamiseks. Väites, et Gruusiat ei nähta olulisemate lääneriikide hulgas võrdväärsena, pooldab populistlik diskursus hoopis riigi liitumist Venemaa poolt eest veetava Euraasia Majandusühendusega, kus Gruusia oleks võrdväärne teiste endiste nõukogude riikidega. Nende kahe võistleva diskursuse omavahelised vastuolud tuginevad seega ka suurel määral Gruusia nõukogude minevikule ja selle tõlgendustele. Liberaalid käsitlevad perioodi vahemikus 1921 kuni 1991 okupatsiooniaastatena, mis takistasid Gruusia tagasipöördumist euroopalike juurte juurde, samas kui populistliku narratiivi kohaselt oli Gruusia ühiskond just nõukogude ajal – ja erinevalt tänapäevast – kõrgelt arenenud ning võrdne teiste NSVLi liikmesriikidega.

Läbiviidud empiiriline analüüs illustreerib, et see lõputu siirdefaas, mille saatuseks on jääda alaliselt vaid pooleldi lõpetatuks, toodab teatud tüüpi teadmist minapildi kohta, mis on mõlema poole poolt enamjaolt aktsepteeritud. Samaaegselt säilitatakse hierarhiline diskursus, mille kohaselt lääs on ülimuslik. Selles tulenevalt võib jälgida kahte samaaegset, paralleelset protsessi: teatud normatiivsete standardite internaliseerimist, mis puudutavad moderniseerumist, demokratiseerumist jne, ning stigmatiseerimist, mis käib kaasas enesekolonisatsiooni protsessiga.

Diskursusteooria rakendamine Euroopa Naabruspoliitika sihtriikide euroopastumise taseme uurimiseks loob võimaluse distantseeruda essentsialistlikust lähenemisest ja vaadelda neid protsesse nende spetsiifilistest ajaloolistest kontekstidest ja spetsiifilistest diskursustest lähtuvalt, mis aitab neid omakorda naturaliseerida. Diskursusteooria aitab määratleda Euroopa rolli Gruusia identiteedidiskursustes. Selline lähenemine on sobivaim, problematiseerimaks identiteedinarratiive liminaalsetes üksustes, sest poststrukturalistlikes lähenemistes ei ole eesmärgiks tõeliste identiteetide identifitseerimine, vaid pigem nende konstrueerimine.

Uurimisdisain ja metodoloogiline raamistik

Selle väitekirja puhul on tegemist ühe juhtumi uuringuga. Keskendumine vaid ühele juhtumile korraga võimaldab rahvusvahelistes suhetes luua „tihedaid kirjeldusi“, ehk teada rohkemat vähemast, selmet teada vähemat rohkemast, nagu on sageli tulemuseks võrdlevate juhtumiuuringute puhul. Uurimistöös rakendatakse diskursusteooria metodoloogilist raamistikku Gruusia juhtumile, vastav uurimisraamistik on esmalt välja arendatud selliste autorite nagu Laclau ja Mouffe töödes. Nende autorite fookuses on aga peamiselt teooria arendamine, konkreetseid vahendeid metodoloogilise analüüsi läbiviimiseks tutvustatakse vähe, mistõttu on oluline täiendada nende metodoloogilist raamistikku poststrukturaalse diskursusanalüüsiga (Jørgensen ja Phillips, 2002: 24).

Peamine empiiriline andmestik koosneb ametlikest dokumentidest, presidentide ametisse astumise kõnedest ning mitmete laiatarbeajalehtede ja -meediakanalite materjalidest, mis taastoodavad nii dominantseid kui ka vastustavaid narratiive.

Peamised tulemused

Liberaalne rahvusliku identiteedi diskursus

Liberaalse narratiivi artikuleerimisel kerkib esile kolm sõlmpunkti: transformatsioon või „mittepiisava“ euroopalikkuse parandamine; Euroopa ja Aasia ristteedel paiknemine; Gruusia ajalooline kuulumine Euroopa tsivilisatsiooni. Need kolm elementi moodustavad üleüldise identiteedinarratiivi, mis muudab teatud välispoliitilised trajektoorid võimalikuks. Dominantne diskursus rahvuslikust identiteedist moodustab osa ja annab tähenduse sõjalistel missioonidel osalemisele, Venemaale ja teistele endistele Nõukogude Liidu riikidele või kommunistlikule pärandile. See kuuluvuse taastootmine aitab adresseerida ebakindlust, mis tuleneb ühekorraga nii sees kui väljas olemisest.

Dominantne diskursus moodustub poliitilise eliidi poolt artikuleeritud tekstidest. Liberaalsele identiteedi diskursusele pühendatud peatükk analüüsib, kuidas välispoliitika on mõjutatud rahvuslikust identiteedist ja teisipidi mõjutab rahvuslikku identiteeti, selle vastastikmõju tagajärjel aga kinnistuvad teatud elemendid diskursiivsel väljal. Sellegi poolest jäävad nende elementide

tähendused vaidlustatuks, nende täielikku kinnistumist on võimatu saavutada, mistõttu eksisteerib ka alternatiivne kommunistliku pärandi ja sõjalistel välismissioonidel osalemise artikulatsioon. Seda vaidlustatust võimendab Gruusia liminaalne paiknemine ida/lääne neksuses ja sellest tulenev mitmetimõistetavus.

Populistlik rahvusliku identiteedi diskursus

Selle peatüki eesmärgiks on illustreerida, kuidas väljendub rahvuslik identiteet populistlikus narratiivis. See narratiiv on eksklusiivne, sest tugineb tugevalt vormelile grusiin = õigeusklik, välistades seega teiste religioossete gruppide või etniliste gruppide esindajad, hoolimata nende kodakondsusest. See võrrand moodustab sõlmpunkti, mis omakorda mõjutab, kuidas populistlik diskursus interpreteerib nõukogude aja pärandit, Stalinit, välispoliitikat või Balti riikide hetkeseisu. Õigeusklikkuse sõlmpunktist lähtuvalt on Euroopa Liit, USA, NATO ja lääs üleüldiselt kui konstitutiivne Teine; kui võõraste, välismaiste väärtuste pealesurujad. Õigeusklik Venemaa see-eest on selle narratiivi kohaselt aga lähemal Gruusia enda minapildile.

Ka selle neksuse puhul muutub alternatiivsete/paralleelsete rahvusliku identiteedi kontseptsioonide konstrueerimine võimalikuks Gruusia liminaalse positsiooni tõttu. Et Euroopa idapiiri on pidevas kujunemisjärgus, ei ole ka ühest vastust küsimusele, kas Gruusia ühiskond kuulub läände või itta. Selline vahepealsus viitab sellele, et riik võib olla nii seespool kui väljaspool seda, mida mõistetakse Euroopana ning lõplik staatus sõltubki eeskätt erinevatest artikulatsioonidest. Kui eelnevas peatükis keskendusin selle uurimisele, kuidas Euroopa Liidu- ja NATO-meelsed välispoliitikad on vastastikku loovas suhtes rahvusliku identiteedi liberaalse artikulatsiooniga, siis see peatükk oli pühendatud alternatiivsele liminaalsuse positsioneeringule, mida nimetan populistlikuks. Valisin selle termini, sest see diskursus on selgelt süsteemi- ja eliidivastane. See diskursus apelleerib massidele ja inimestele, olles avalikult vastu immigratsioonile ja vähemuste õiguste kaitsele. Lisaks osalevad seda diskursust toetavad grupid sageli vandenõuteooriate (taas)tootmises. Liberaalid, Soros, vabamüürlased, LGBTQ lobistid jne õõnestavad selle diskursuse järgi õigeusklikku tsivilisatsiooni ja niinimetatud traditsioonilisi väärtusi.

Empiiriline andmestik pärineb enamalt jaolt kahest üleriigilise levikuga ajalehest, *„Sakartvelo da Msoflio"* ja *„Asaval-Dasavali"*, ning Gruusia Patriootide Ühenduse ja Euraasia Instituudi tekstidest. Need toimijad on intertekstuaalselt ja interdiskursiivselt omavahel seotud, moodustades koostoimes suure võrgustiku, mis populistlikku diskursust toetab ja artikuleerib.

Selle uurimistöö empiirilised leiud on mitmeti kasulikud edasiseks uurimistööks. Usun, et tehes uurimistööd ühise naabruskonna osas, peame laiendama oma analüütilist fookust Brüsselilt idapartnerluse riikidele endile.

Keskendudes rahvusliku identiteedi diskursustele ja nende vastastiksuhetele välispoliitikaga selliste rahvusvahelistes suhetes „väikesekaaluliste" toimijate puhul, panustame rahvusvaheliste suhete uurimisagenda laiendamisesse ja eurotsentristlike lähenemiste seljatamisesse.

Lisaks loob see uurimus võimaluse laiendada kasutatud lähenemist tulevikus ka teistele Lõuna-Kaukaasia riikidele ning koostada võrdlev uurimus Armeeniast, Aserbaidžaanist ja Gruusiast. Millised on erinevad välispoliitilised diskursused ja rahvusliku identiteedi kontseptsioonid ja kas ühine geograafiline asukoht (liminaalne positsioneering) loob sarnasusi või erinevusi? Uurimistöö edasiarendused võivad ka avada, millisel määral ja kui tugevalt esineb nende riikide välispoliitikas tsivilisatsioonilisi diskursusi.

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