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The Impact of Totalitarian Rule on Contemporary European Union Policy: The Case of Latvia and its Linguistic Divide

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Abstract

The influence of multiple totalitarian regimes has resulted in the Latvia of today becoming a multi-ethnic society. The reinstatement of Latvia's outdated 1922 constitution following independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, failed to deal with the demographic changes that had taken place under Soviet rule. Notably, protections for minority groups were given no constitutional, nor subsequent legislative backing. This was only partially addressed under the EU's Copenhagen Criteria requirement on minority protections as part of the accession process. As the situation was not fully dealt with during accession, the language rights of minorities of Latvia continue to be impacted on. This article examines paradoxes in EU policy towards minority languages. It is argued that given this historic context, the current system of EU languages is discriminatory and unduly impacts on the linguistic rights of a large proportion of the Latvian and broader EU populace.

Introduction

From its driving role in international conflicts, to its horrifying impact on the lives of millions, modern totalitarian rule is one of the twentieth century's most defining ideologies. Totalitarian rule has held a central role in shaping modern Latvian history. This is most obviously true of Latvia's forced annexation under the Soviet Union (1940-1941 and 1945-1991), and equally clear in its brief period of Nazi rule (1941-1945). Perhaps more surprisingly, momentum towards totalitarian rule can equally be detected in Latvia's interwar independence earlier in the century. As a consequence of this rule, a distinct ethnic divide in Latvia is now present. The most obvious public manifestation of this divide is visible through Latvian national language policy. This paper examines the impact of this inescapable history of totalitarian rule on Latvia's contemporary social and political landscape, especially its 2004 integration into the European Union (EU).

Drawing on the historic justifications for contemporary policies towards ethnic minorities in Latvia, this paper argues that current Latvian, and to a greater extent, EU policies do little to address the legacy of linguistic and ethnic pluralism that totalitarian rule left. With language often being described as a core element of national identity,²

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² For example, A. Caviedes, 'The Role of Language in Nation-Building within the European Union', *Dialectical Anthropology*, Vol. 27, Nos.3/4, 2003, p.249; S. Wright, *Community and Communication: The role of language in nation state building and European integration*, Clevedon, Multilingual Matters Ltd, 2000, p.121.

this paper further contends that, given Latvia's historic circumstances, the current system of official languages in the EU causes *de facto* discrimination, unduly impacting on the linguistic rights of a large proportion of the Latvian and broader EU population.

The Historic Precedence

Alongside national aspirations, Latvia has historically enacted discriminatory public policy. It is an irony of the Latvian political landscape that such policies have too been core in occupiers' attempts to assert their versions of hegemony over the local population. Although a Latvian national consciousness first began to emerge in the late nineteenth century,³ discriminatory ultra-nationalist policy only developed under totalitarian rule in the mid-late 1930s. The emergence of discriminatory attitudes and their manifestation in public policy was supported and reinforced by the constitution. This stance toward ethnic minorities is typical of totalitarian led societies who reject "toleration, pluralism and the open society."⁴ Of the lack of protection for minority groups in the Latvian constitution, James Pollock noted in 1923 that "There is very little reason why racial or religious difficulties should arise, since the large majority of the population are Letts and belong to the Lutheran Church".⁵

Pollock's claim was inaccurate, as there was a significant minority ethnic population. Between 1885 and 1897, under the rule of imperial Russian leader Tsar Alexander III, a process of 'Russification' had taken place.⁶ Additionally, Germans had been economically, politically and socially influential in Latvia over a 700 year history of dominance and social oppression over the local population.⁷ In 1935, the Germans were a small, but influential minority, comprising 3.2 per cent of the population.⁸ The state was multi-ethnic, comprising significant proportions of Polish, Roma and other minority groups.⁹ Andres Kasekamp indicates that it was such ethnic minorities, totalling almost a quarter of the population when combined, who held disproportionate political, social and economic influence being social elites holding political and economic power.¹⁰

The influence of these groups was evident in the fact that many minority schools existed, maintained by state funds, and so too, numerous allowances were being made for the use of minority languages in administrative and legal.¹¹ After dissolving the *saeima*

³ A. Pabriks & A. Purs, *Latvia: The Challenges of Change*, London, Routledge, 2001, pp.1-2.

⁴ A. Heywood, *Political Ideologies: An Introduction 4th Edition*, Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p.217.

⁵ J. K. Pollock, 'The constitution of Latvia', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 1923, p.448.

⁶ J.W. Hidden, 'The Baltic Germans and German policy towards Latvia after 1918', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 1970, p.295; A. Plakans, 'Democratization and political participation in post communist societies: The case of Latvia', in K. Dawisha & B. Parrott (eds), *The consolidation of democracy in East-Central Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp.100-101.

⁷ M. M. Laserson, 'The recognition of Latvia', *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 37, No. 2, 1943, p.236.

⁸ D. S. Eglitis, *Imagining the nation: History, modernity, and revolution in Latvia*, University Park, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002, p.108.

⁹ G. Hogan-Brun, et al., 'Language politics and practices in the Baltic States', *Current Issues in Language Planning*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 2007, p.8.

¹⁰ A. Kasekamp, 'Radical right-wing movements in the North-East Baltic', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 34, No. 4, 1999, p.594.

¹¹ Hogan-Brun, et al., op cit., p.9.

(Parliament) and seizing total rule in a 1934 *coup d'état*, Latvian leader Karlis Ulmanis became particularly concerned by the high proportion of property and other capital controlled by those not ethnically Latvian. His right-wing ultra-nationalist policies eliminated higher education teaching in the traditional languages of German and Russian, replacing them with Latvian.¹² This resulted in those of German, Russian and Jewish descent being squeezed out of positions of political and economic influence, with preferential treatment given to Latvians.¹³ This was a 'textbook' case of Ernest Gellner's theories on the emergence of nationalism in what was by all accounts an agrarian society in transition. That is, emphasis was placed on an education system and high culture, protected by the state, and supposedly endorsed by the populace.¹⁴ It was, however, those of German descent who were the subject of any real animosity in Latvia due to their historic hegemony over the local population.¹⁵ Equivalent discriminatory policy also emerged during this period in other fascist states in Europe. It is well documented that during the 1930s Germany began to enact public policy which favoured ethnic Germans.¹⁶ However, when "compared to the other dictatorships in the world, his [Ulmanis'] was truly mild."¹⁷ While Latvia's nationalistic policies were comparable to those enacted in many other European states during the 1930s, their resurrection in post-Soviet Latvia was to become a significant complicating factor in the democratisation process and causing discord in the European integration process.

Three days after the fall of Paris to Nazi Germany and in line with the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the Soviet military commenced occupation of Latvia on 17 June 1940. Soviet provocateurs organised mass marches and meetings designed to create the impress of the beginnings of a popular uprising. 'Official' Soviet accounts described it as the "overthrow" of "the hated fascist government", bringing "the age long aspirations of the Latvian people" into being.¹⁸ A staged election with only one candidate brought to power the *saiema* which soon after voted unanimously for Latvia to become part of the USSR.¹⁹ Following this, a relatively short period of Nazi occupation from 1941-1944 was followed by Soviet occupation once again, sending approximately 120-150,000 Latvians to seek exile in the West.²⁰

Under Soviet rule another intensive process of 'Russification' took place, which significantly eclipsed that earlier undertaken by Imperial Russia. In the 1940s, for example, over 50,000 of Latvia's educated elite were deported to Siberia.²¹ In 1945,

¹² Ibid.

¹³ A. Plakans, *The Latvians: A short history*, Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 1995, p.135.

¹⁴ E. Gellner, *Nations and nationalism*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1983, pp.8-14.

¹⁵ A. Ezergailis, *The Holocaust in Latvia, 1941-1944: The Missing Center*, The Historical Institute of Latvia, Riga, 1996, p.80.

¹⁶ See for example, C. Browning, 'The decision-making process', in D. Stone (ed.), *The Historiography of the Holocaust*, London, Routledge, 2004, pp.174-175; H. Friedlaender, 'Step by step: The expansion of murder, 1939-41', in O. Bartov (ed.), *The Holocaust: Origins, Implementation, Aftermath*, London, Routledge, 2000, pp.65-67; M. Burleigh & W. Wippermann, 'The 'uniqueness' of Nazi racialism', in A. A. Kallis (ed.), *The Fascism Reader*, London, Routledge, 2003, pp.335.

¹⁷ J. Dreifelds, *Latvia in transition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p.30.

¹⁸ J. Kalnberzins, *Ten Years of Soviet Latvia*, Moscow, Foreign Language Publishing House, 1951, p.7.

¹⁹ Plakans, *The Latvians: A short history*, op cit., p.144-145; Eglitis, op cit., p.6.

²⁰ M. Grunts, *Latvians in exile in the free world 1940-1980*, London: M.V. Grunts (self published), c.1980, p.1.

²¹ V. Nollendorfs, & U. Neiburgs, *Soviet mass deportations from Latvia*, Latvijas Instituts, 2006, <<http://www.li.lv/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=142>>, accessed 23 August 2008.

Latvians comprised close to 80 per cent of the local population, dropping to 52 percent by 1989.²² Although a national resistance existed until the 1950s, all political parties other than the Communist Party of the Soviet Union were banned. Farms and industry were collectivised. The use of the Latvian language was curbed, and the display of the Latvian national flag was forbidden.²³ In the Baltic States, the Russian language was termed by the Soviet occupiers to be “the language of friendship of nations.”²⁴ The hidden subtext of this was an aim to destroy the local languages, which had been identified by the occupiers as a key element in national identity.

Language has historically been used as a control mechanism by European totalitarian regimes to reinforce the dominance of the state’s nationality. This was explicitly the case in Mussolini’s Italy and Hitler’s Germany.²⁵ The Soviet Union’s foundational Marxist-Leninist ideology however, purported to define groupings of people by class rather than nation. The Soviet Union spoke of there being 130 equal languages in the USSR.²⁶ While this remained the official stance, from 1958 Russian became the *lingua franca* of the entire USSR.²⁷ All public administration was conducted in Russian, as was all academic discourse. Unsurprisingly, suppression of the national minority occurred alongside such restrictive language policy.

Ironically, Communist propaganda used Latvia’s brief periods of fascist rule and Nazi occupation to undermine international criticism of their own illegitimate occupancy. Implying that their occupation of Latvia had been a matter of choice, one 1965 Soviet ‘academic’ publication described a lobby group of East European refugees in America as “Nazi collaborationists” with the aim of casting “rude slander on their countries who *decided* to go socialist [emphasis added].”²⁸ Soviet representations of lobbyist ‘political refugees’ depicted them as charlatans “spreading false information and outright lies about the Socialist countries” to grow “rich at the expense of their fellow exiles, thousands of Latvians abroad [who] live under hard conditions.”²⁹ When referring to the Western call for Latvian “freedom and rights”, the authors of this State published text claimed that this actually meant “the freedom and right to repeat the previous Nazi barbarities.”³⁰ Such Soviet propaganda uses Latvia’s totalitarian history to filter the brutal nature of their own regime.

²² A. Sprudz, ‘Rebuilding democracy in Latvia: Overcoming a dual legacy’, in J. Zielonka (ed.), *Democratic consolidation in Eastern Europe, Volume I: Institutional engineering*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, p.140; E. Stern, et al., ‘Crisis management in transitional democracies: The Baltic experience’, *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 37, No.4, 2002, p.530.

²³ Nollendorfs & Neiburgs, op. cit.

²⁴ Eesti Instituut, *Estonica: Russification*, undated, <http://www.estonica.org/eng/lugu.html?kateg=43&menyy_id=99&alam=61&leht=11>, accessed 1 October 2008.

²⁵ M. Blinkhorn, *Mussolini and Fascist Italy*, London, Routledge, 1994, p.4; J. J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 2000, p.5.

²⁶ For example, M. I. Isaev, *One hundred and thirty with equal rights: On languages of the peoples of the USSR*, Moscow, Nauka, 1970.

²⁷ L. A. Grenoble and A. Lenore, *Language policy in the Soviet Union*, New York, Springer, 2003.

²⁸ J. Silabriedis & B. Arklans, *‘Political refugees’ unmasked!*, Riga, Latvian State Publishing House, 1965, p.189.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.209.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.212.

The Inter-War Legacy Revived

When Latvia regained independence following the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, the constitution of 1922 was reinstated. Many Western powers had not recognized *de jure* the annexation of Latvia,³¹ therefore the constitution's re-adoption emphasised the continuity of the state.³² Despite the constitution allowing the conditions for the rise of totalitarian rule in the inter-war period, its adoption of this constitution was a case of "choosing what seemed to be a lesser evil."³³ The Latvian Prime Minister continues to hold the same powers which gave way to Karlis Ulmanis' seizure of total rule in 1934. In this respect, Andrejs Plakans describes that "The authoritarian period in the interwar republic... is a silent but nevertheless eloquent reminder that the Latvian state had already experienced one failure of parliamentary democracy".³⁴ Ilze Koroleva and Ritma Rungule cautiously note that the elderly in particular, are nostalgic towards the 'golden years' of independent interwar Latvia under the Ulmanis regime.³⁵ Unlike in Russia where there has been a tendency for younger generations to idealise the certainty and social order of their Soviet past, Latvian youth have developed belief systems which reflect that of their grandparents' generation.³⁶

The newly (re)independent Latvia immediately began to enact discriminatory policy towards ethnic Latvians, in the guise of responding to decades of Soviet 'Russification'. It remains an irony that the same justification was used to popularise Ulmanis' interwar policy. Based on the concept of *jus sanguinis*, the right of blood, the *Law on Citizenship* 1994 indicated that persons who were "Latvian citizens before June 17, 1940, and their descendants" are automatically entitled to citizenship.³⁷ While the post-Soviet Latvia was demographically a multi-ethnic society, such citizenship law resulted in the homogenisation of the emerging political system.³⁸ Anton Steen suggests this was the intention of the Latvian political elite. He indicates it was motivated by a need to "protect the national core."³⁹ Discriminatory legislation continued to be passed on this basis. The ethnically homogenous political elite continued to hold consensual attitudes towards such discrimination.⁴⁰ This culminated in the passing of the 1998 education law, which dictated that year-ten students could only be taught in the state language of

³¹ Sprudz, op. cit., p.140.

³² A leader of a Diaspora civil society group in Australia, Aivars Mednis described the West's non- *de jure* recognition of Soviet rule as being "the most significant contribution" to the independence cause of Latvia and the other Baltic States cited in Baltic Council of Australia, 1989, p.1.

³³ Sprudz, op. cit., p.141.

³⁴ A. Plakans, 'Democratization and political participation in post communist societies: The case of Latvia', in K. Dawisha & B. Parrott (eds), *The consolidation of democracy in East-Central Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p.254.

³⁵ I. Koroleva & R. Rungule, 'Latvia: Democracy as an abstract value', in H. Klingermann; D. Fuchs & J. Zielonka (eds), *Democracy and political culture in Eastern Europe*, Milton Park, Routledge, 2006, p.238.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.235.

³⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, 'Latvian citizenship', <<http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/service/4727/>>, accessed 2 May 2008.

³⁸ V V. Pettai & M. Kreuzer, 'Party politics in the Baltic States: Social bases and institutional context', *East European Politics & Societies*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 1998, p.152.

³⁹ A. Steen, *Between past and future: Elites, democracy and the state in post-communist countries: A comparison of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 1997, p.86.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.282.

Latvian.⁴¹ Responses to this by members of the Russian community implied that “the state is reliving a Nazi past in the present.”⁴² Placards adorning swastikas becoming a common feature of protest rallies by Russian speaking minorities.⁴³ The impact of Soviet anti-Latvian nationalism propaganda, thus still lives on today.

European Accession as a Catalyst for Change

The European integration process has had a distinct effect on the emergence of Latvian neo-Fascism. This has however been a paradoxical process. The lure of the common market, and the security that NATO promised, caused Latvia to rethink its discriminatory policies. While the European Union (and to a lesser extent NATO) accession process resulted in a minority rights dialogue being established in Latvia, some European Union policy has actually worked to reinforce the ethnic divide. This has once again manifested itself primarily through minority language policy and law.

Due to warnings that the 1998 education law in its current form would hinder Latvia’s chances of joining the EU, it was amended to allow 40 percent of the curriculum to be taught in a minority language.⁴⁴ As a result of this amendment, Latvia was invited to commence EU accession negotiations.⁴⁵ NATO Secretary-General George Robertson indicated in 2002 that Latvia risked exclusion from the alliance because its discriminatory laws were not conforming to NATO’s political ideals.⁴⁶ As a result of these external pressures, constitutional amendments were ratified in 2002. Section 114 of the constitution now reads that “Persons belonging to ethnic minorities have the right to preserve and develop their language and their ethnic and cultural identity”.⁴⁷ The lure of engagement in the European Common Market and the security of the NATO alliance caused Latvia to adopt a less discriminatory body of law.

European Language Policy: Reviving Latvia’s Interwar Legacy Again?

The European Union continues to hold paradoxical attitudes towards linguistic diversity, including the use of minority languages. Since the 1992 ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, the European Commission (the Commission) has actively promoted language learning, with linguistic diversity forming the cornerstone of European education policy.⁴⁸ In fact, the Commission explicitly indicates that this includes the

⁴¹ D. J. Galbreath, ‘Still ‘treading air’? Looking at the post-enlargement challenges to democracy in the Baltic States’, *Demokratizatsiya*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2008, p.93.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ For example, Ibid.

⁴⁴ D. J. Galbreath, ‘European Integration through Democratic Conditionality: Latvia in the Context of Minority Rights’, *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 2006, p.93; F. Schimmelfennig, S. Engert & H. Knobel, ‘Costs, commitment and compliance: The impact of EU democratic conditionality on Latvia, Slovakia and Turkey’, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 3, 2003, p.513.

⁴⁵ Schimmelfennig, Engert & Knobel, op. cit., pp.513-514.

⁴⁶ New York University School of Law, ‘Latvia - constitutional watch: East European constitutional review’, 2002, <http://www.law.nyu.edu/eecr/vol11num3/constitutionwatch/latvia_print.html>, accessed 17 March 2008.

⁴⁷ Latvia, *Constitution of Latvia*, 1922 (with amendments as at 2008).

⁴⁸ European Commission, *High level group on multilingualism: Final report*, 2007.

learning of regional or minority languages.⁴⁹ The Commission's aim of linguistic freedom and diversity is, however, challenged by the current structure of official EU languages – an inflexible situation imbedded in one of the European Community's foundational laws.

From its inception, the European Union established a structure of official languages. Regulation 1 passed by the European Economic Community, a predecessor to the EU, was that “determining the languages to be used by the European Economic Community.” This regulation dictates that:

Documents which a Member State or a person subject to the jurisdiction of a Member State sends to institutions of the Community may be drafted in any one of the official languages selected by the sender. The reply shall be drafted in the same language.⁵⁰

While in 1958 this initially referred to the languages of the founding members, this has now been expanded by a number of amendments to currently include 23 national languages spoken in the European Union.⁵¹

Despite an official policy of equality among the official languages of the EU, the actual working languages of its institutions have been a cause of tension among particular Member States. While the French language was historically dominant in the European institutions, with the gradual expansions of the European Union, English has started to emerge as its *lingua franca*.⁵² This is unsurprising since approximately 69 per cent of the European population can speak English.⁵³ A number of protests have been made by German officials for being addressed in English in an official capacity.⁵⁴ Thus, in an attempt to avoid such criticisms, many European institutions employ multiple working languages. These are usually English, French and German, and occasionally Spanish or Italian. These languages being the five most widely understood languages prior to the 2004 expansion.⁵⁵ The eastern expansion of 2004 however, caused a marked shift in linguistic diversity and the dominance of particular languages. Italian was no longer one of the top five languages spoken, rather, Russian had taken its place.⁵⁶ It is a strange irony that the Soviet ‘Russification’ process was retrospectively successful at promoting linguistic dominance in what is now a large part of the EU. Of the 44 per cent of the

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ European Council, *Regulation 1*, Brussels, 1958, OJ L17 6.10.1958.

⁵¹ These being, Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish and Swedish. See European Commission, ‘Languages of Europe’, undated, <http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/languages/index_en.html>, accessed 26 September 2008.

⁵² U. Ammon, ‘The status of German and other languages in the European Community’, in F. Coulmas (ed.), *A Language Policy for the European Community*, Berlin, Mouton de Gruyter, 1991, p.249.

⁵³ European Commission, *Special Eurobarometer: Europeans and their Languages*, 2006, p.14.

⁵⁴ U. Ammon, ‘Language conflicts in the European Union’, *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 2006, p.322; European Ombudsman, ‘Recommendation to the European Commission in complaint 259/2005/(PB)GG’, 2005; European Ombudsman, ‘Special Report from the European Ombudsman to the European Parliament following the draft recommendation to the Council of the European Union in complaint 1487/2005/GG’, 2006.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p.331.

⁵⁶ see, European Commission, *Special Eurobarometer*, op. cit., p.6.

European Union population who can speak Russian, 16 per cent reportedly speak it on a daily basis.⁵⁷

Through its language policy, the EU holds a paradoxical stance towards minority languages. By not accommodating citizens to communicate with its institutions in non-official although widely spoken languages (such as Russian), the EU claims to support the use and promotion of minority and non-official languages. In 1992, the Council of Europe adopted the *European Charter for Minority Languages* (the Charter). Although not being an initiative of the EU, the European Parliament supported and encouraged its Member States to ratify the Charter.⁵⁸ Article 10 of the Charter indicates that public authorities must recognise the use of minority languages, and allow documentation and communications to take place between the populace and authorities in these languages.⁵⁹ This is inconsistent with the European Economic Community's Regulation 1. That said, the European Economic Community itself was not a signatory of this convention. Although a number of Member States did ratify this convention, those on the eastern boundaries of the community are notably absent. This is understandable given historic attempts by occupiers to purge them of their nationhood.

Since Latvia's independence and subsequent accession to the European Union, the ethnically Russian population has remained a large and numerically stable proportion of the population. The majority of the ethnic-Russian population have also maintained their language usage. While between 1989 and 2007 there was a slight drop in the Russian population of both nations, it would appear that with European integration this has plateaued (see Error! Reference source not found.). In 2007, national statistics note that in Latvia 28 per cent are ethnically Russian.⁶⁰ These figures correlate closely with EU statistics on language usage in these states. Russian is noted as the mother tongue of 26 per cent of Latvian citizens.⁶¹ These statistics on language usage exclude those who are non-citizens, meaning that they are however, significant underestimations. In 2001, for example, there were 550,000 stateless people living in Latvia – the vast majority of who are likely to be ethnically Russian.⁶²

⁵⁷ Ibid. p.16.

⁵⁸ Wright, op. cit., p.188.

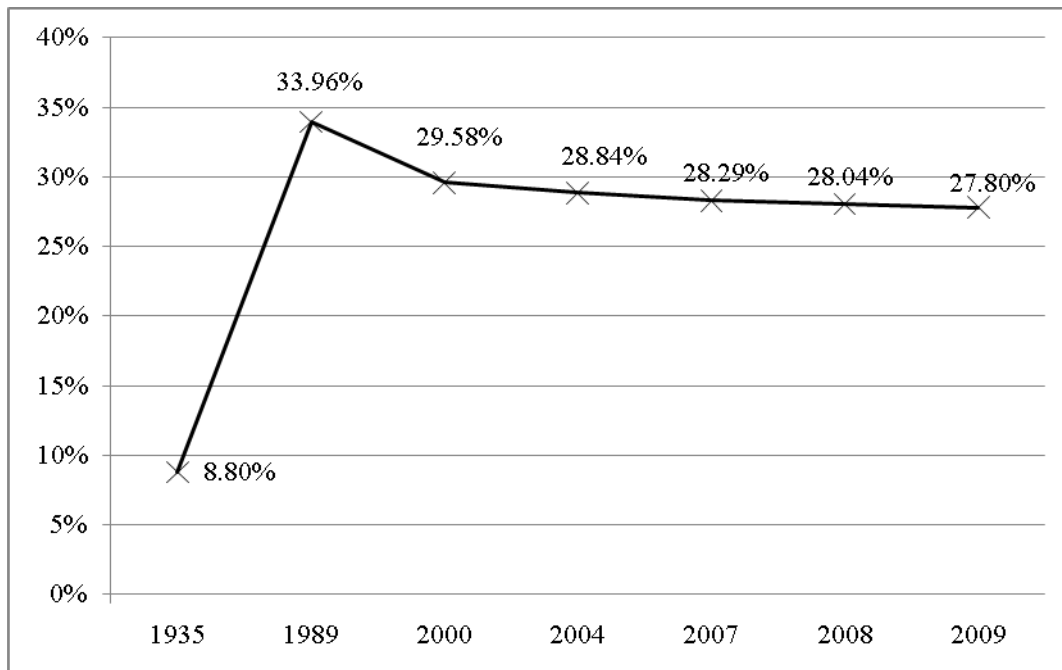
⁵⁹ Council of Europe, *European Charter for Minority Languages*, 1992, article 10.

⁶⁰ Latvijas statistika, Census data and national statistics.

⁶¹ European Commission, *Special Eurobarometer*, op. cit., p.6.

⁶² M. Johns, "Do As I Say, Not As I Do": The European Union, Eastern Europe and Minority Rights', *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 17, No.4, 2003, p.691.

Figure 1: Percentage of Latvian population ethnically Russian by year (source: Latvijas statistika)



The emergence of supra-nationalism through the EU is often cited as representing the decline of the nation state.⁶³ Indeed, a key intention of the early European integration project was to off-set the rivalries between competing nation-states.⁶⁴ A paradox of this contention lies in the continued reinforcement of dominant nationalities through the EU structure of official languages. As a result, at a national level, minority language rights are often swept aside under the auspices of nationalist-driven cultural and linguistic homogeneity.⁶⁵ This is reflected in the *Official Language Law* of Latvia which states:

The purpose of this law is to ensure... the maintenance of the cultural and historic heritage of the Latvian nation; ... [and] the increased influence of the Latvian language in the cultural environment of Latvia, to promote a more rapid integration of society.⁶⁶

⁶³ See for example, U. Beck & E. Grande, 'Cosmopolitanism: Europe's Way Out of Crisis', *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol.10, No.1, pp.67-86 (pp.69-70); F. Cerutti, 'A Political Identity of the Europeans?', *Thesis Eleven*, Vol. 72, 2003, p.34-38; R. Kastoryano, 'Citizenship: Beyond Blood and Soil', in R. Leveau, K. Mohsen-Finan & C. Wihtol de Wenden (eds), *New European Identity and Citizenship*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2002, p.115-116; S. Huntington, *The Clash of the Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1996, p.35.

⁶⁴ D. P. Calleo, 'Reflections on the idea of the nation-state', in C. A. Kupchan (ed.) *Nationalism and nationalities in the New Europe*, Ithica, Cornell University Press, 1995, p.34; G. Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality*, Houndmills, Macmillan, 1995, p.27; D. Messenger, 'Dividing Europe: The Cold War and European Integration', in D. Dinan (ed.), *Origins and Evolution of the European Union*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, p.36-39.

⁶⁵ S. May, 'Language, Nationalism and Democracy in Europe' in G. Hogan-Brun and S. Wolff (eds), *Minority Languages in Europe: Frameworks, Status, Prospects*, Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, p.215.

⁶⁶ Latvia, *Official Language Law*, 1999, section 1.

This law also dictates that all other languages of the Republic of Latvia are to be regarded as foreign.⁶⁷ Among the Copenhagen Criteria which Latvia (and other potential Member States) had to fulfil in the EU accession process, was that of the “protection of minorities.”⁶⁸ This had little practical effect in Latvia. A number of writers attribute this to it being an ambiguous requirement.⁶⁹ Despite pre-accession process negotiations promoting ethnic and linguistic diversity, as a result of such actions during the actual accession process (or indeed lack of actions) minority communities have a great distrust for the EU.⁷⁰

Conclusion

It remains a curious irony the European Union does not have a legal requirement to communicate with a large proportion of its residents in their mother tongue. Although this may be, in part, attributed to the rapid shift in linguistic diversity through the EU's eastern expansions, the restrictions on languages through which European public authorities will communicate with their residents hold some core similarities to language restrictions under totalitarian regimes of the left and right. While on one hand, the EU is promoting language diversity through its minority language initiatives, on the other hand, the system of official languages is preventing true linguistic freedom and diversity from becoming a reality. In a large part, national governments, such as Latvia's, are responsible for this. Although it is understandable given the historic attempts to destroy the Latvian nation, the insistence on homogenous nationalistic and protectionist language policy appears to be counter to the intentions of the European integration project.

⁶⁷ Ibid. section 5. This is with the exception of the indigenous Livonian language (*Official Language Law* 1999: Section 5). As at 2005, there were only 170 people who count themselves as ethnic Livs, with the language spoken by only a handful of people aged over the age of 80. Liv is the rarest language in the European Union. See I. Mezs, 'Ethnic Minorities in Latvia', Latvijas Instituts, 2005, <http://www.li.lv/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=77&Itemid=464>, accessed 18 September 2008.

⁶⁸ European Commission, 'Glossary – Accession Criteria (Copenhagen Criteria)', <http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/accession_criteria_copenhagen_en.htm>, accessed 1 October 2008.

⁶⁹ Galbreath, 'European Integration through Democratic Conditionality,' op. cit., p.75; P. Vermeersch, 'Poland: minority policies in a homogenized state', in B. Rechel (ed.), *Minority Rights in Central and Eastern Europe*, Milton Park, Routledge, 2009, p.174.

⁷⁰ Galbreath, 'European Integration through Democratic Conditionality,' op. cit., p.75.

Should Turkey be Admitted into the European Union? The Debate

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Abstract

Over the past decades, the European Union has witnessed an increasing apathy among European citizens' vis-à-vis EU institutions. In 1993, EU elites formally introduced the idea of a 'European citizenship' in an attempt on the one hand, to reactivate the European integration project, and, on the other hand, to foster greater consciousness of the European identity which the EU is supposed to represent. What opportunities and challenges would Turkey's accession to EU membership have on our idea of 'European citizenship' and 'identity'? An analysis on the current debate regarding Turkey's possible accession in the EU raises significant questions on the EU's identity and on the role of the EU in the international community.

The prospect of Turkish membership in the European Union (EU) has become one of the most politically contentious issues in Europe. Turkey's possible accession presents the EU with many challenges and opportunities and raises significant questions about the nature of the EU entity and about its future role in the international community.² Is Turkey a European country? What is the nature of the EU entity? Will Turkey be an asset or a liability to the European Union? What are the economic, political, social and cultural implications of Turkish accession? Since October 2005, the European Commission and Turkish negotiators have looked systematically into the way Turkish legislation has adopted European law.³ Despite Turkey's institutional reforms which bring the country that much closer towards fulfilling the Copenhagen political criteria,⁴ European politicians and civilians remain deeply divided on whether to offer EU membership to Turkey.

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² H. Sjurssen, *Questioning EU Enlargement: Europe in search of identity*, London, Routledge, 2006.

³ C. Timmerman, D. Rohtus & S. Mels, *European and Turkish Voices in Favour and Against Turkish Accession to the European Union*, Brussels, P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2008.

⁴ The 'Copenhagen Political Criteria' also known as the 'Copenhagen conditions' are a set of formal political requirements — established in 1993 by the European Council in Copenhagen — which determines whether a candidate country can join the European Union. The four criteria include: stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities; the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union; the ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic & monetary union (M. Kesselman, J. Krieger, 'Introduction', in Kesselman et al. 5th ed., *European Politics in Transition*, Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008; and J. McCormick, *Understanding The European Union: A Concise Introduction*, 4th ed., New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

This paper utilises a threefold analytical approach based on ‘utilitarian’, ‘moral’ and ‘ethical’ arguments to examine the current debates for and against Turkey’s admission to the European Union. It begins with a chronology of EU-Turkey relations from 1959 to 2005; followed by an account of the debate surrounding Turkey’s accession. It then analyses the three main approaches: ‘utilitarian’, ‘moral’ ‘ethical’ which reflect a specific vision of the EU entity; this is followed by an examination on the position of the European Commission, the Turkey Parliament, the European public, the French and German elites, and the United States *vis-à-vis* Turkey EU membership. The role of the European Parliament in the enlargement process is discussed; and finally, future prospects for Turkey’s entry into the EU will be explored.

Turkey’s Path to Europe

EU-Turkish relations date back to the early stages of the European integration project.⁵ In 1959 — eight years after the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) — Turkey applied for ‘associate membership’ in the European Economic Community (EEC), and on 12 September 1963 Turkey signed the ‘Agreement Creating An Association Between The Republic of Turkey and the European Economic Community’ commonly referred to as the ‘Ankara Agreement’ which came into effect in December 1964. The ‘Ankara Agreement’ sought to establish a Customs Union between the EEC and Turkey whilst also acknowledging the final goal of membership.⁶ Subsequently, in November 1970, the so-called ‘Additional Protocol’ established a timetable for the abolition of tariffs and quotas on goods traded between Turkey and the EEC. This mutual relationship — between Turkey and the European Community (EC)⁷ — was however temporarily stopped in the early 1980s due to Turkey’s military coup which resulted in economic and political instability.⁸ In November 1983, following the establishment of a new Constitution by public referendum, EU-Turkish relations were fully restored.⁹ Moreover, in 1987 Turkey submitted its application for formal membership into the European Community. However, in 1989 — while confirming Ankara’s eventual membership — the European Commission argued that Turkey’s economic and political situation, as well as its poor relations with Greece and its ongoing conflict with Cyprus created an unfavourable environment to begin negotiations.¹⁰ Despite these setbacks, a Customs Union was established between the EU and Turkey in 1995 and in 1999, the Helsinki European Council officially recognized

⁵ A. Lundgren, ‘The Case of Turkey: Are Some Candidates more European than others’, in H. Sjørnsen, op. cit.

⁶ P. Kubick, ‘Turkish Accession to the European Union: Challenges and Opportunities for the New Europe’, Oakland University, USA, 2005.

⁷ In 1957 two additional communities were created: the European Economic Community (EEC) establishing a customs union and the European Atomic Energy Community ‘Euratom’ for cooperation in developing nuclear energy. In 1967, the Merger Treaty created a single set of institutions for the three communities, which were collectively referred to as the European Communities, although more commonly just as the European Community ‘EC’ (Kesselman, op. cit., pp.39-45).

⁸ M. Ugur & N. Canefe, *Turkey and European Integration: Accession prospects and issues*, London, Routledge, 2004.

⁹ L. McLaren, ‘Explaining Opposition to Turkish Membership of the EU’, *European Union Politics*, Vol.8, No.2, 2007, pp.251-278.

¹⁰ F. Cameron, *An Introduction to European Foreign Policy*, New York, Routledge, 2007.

Turkey as a candidate for membership.¹¹ Finally, in December 2004 the European Council decided to start negotiations with Turkey which culminated in Turkey's official status as a candidate for full membership in October 2005.

The Debate: Arguments "Pro" and "Con" Turkish Membership in the EU

Despite Turkey's positive progression towards EU membership — evident in Turkey's important legal and constitutional reforms which continue to upgrade Turkish democracy in accordance with the Copenhagen political criteria — European and Turkish governments, political parties and citizens remain deeply divided on whether Turkey should become a member of the European Union.¹² Proponents concentrate mainly on the strategic advantages that Turkish membership would have for the EU. Specifically, Turkey enthusiasts emphasize the geo-strategic importance of Turkey for the realisation of the Union's fundamental political interest in creating a secure and prospering neighbourhood.¹³ According to this analysis, Turkey's membership would eventually lead to a more politically stable, democratic and economically advanced Turkey. In summary, Turkey's EU membership would on the one hand, demonstrate that the Western style democracy and economic prosperity is achievable in a country with an overwhelmingly Muslim population, and on the other hand, it would strengthen the EU's co-operation on defence and security matters, particularly in dealing with Iran's nuclear threat and with Iraq's transition to a peaceful and democratic state.¹⁴ Furthermore, although identity arguments — cultural and religious — are utilised predominantly by those opposing Turkish accession, proponents assert that Turkey's membership would demonstrate the limitations of the "Clash of Civilisation" theory.¹⁵ Concurrently, it would highlight the fact that the EU is not limited to a 'Christian club' — as purported by certain European conservatives including the Vatican — but that its values are open to all that want to apply.¹⁶ Indeed, it is contended that Turkey's integration in the EU would send a positive message to the rest of the world, particularly in the Middle Eastern region by demonstrating that democracy and Islam are compatible. Omer Taspinar — an expert on Turkey and the European Union — maintains that Europe as a 'postmodern construct' should not be based on cultural and religious homogeneity but should instead, be based on multiculturalism, pluralism and democracy.¹⁷ Thus, supporters of Turkish EU membership state that Europe's identity should be defined according to the values it purports including liberty, solidarity, pluralism, tolerance and human rights as oppose to exclusionary ideas of culture and

¹¹ F. Baban, 'European Identity in the Making?: Turkey in a Postnational Europe', paper presented to the Annual Meeting of Canadian Political Science Association, Canada, 2006.

¹² A. Ruiz-Jimenez & J. Torreblanca, 'European Public Opinion and Turkey's Accession: Making Sense of Arguments For and Against', *Working Paper, European Policy Institutes Network*, 2007

¹³ H. Kramer, 'Turkey and the EU: The EU's Perspective', lecture given at Network for European Studies, University of Helsinki, Finland, 2007.

¹⁴ Europe's World 2008, 'Arguments for and against Turkey joining the EU', , <<http://www.europesworld.org>>, accessed on 21st May 2009.

¹⁵ D. Senghaas, *The Clash Within Civilisations: Coming to Terms with Cultural Conflicts*, London, Routledge, 2001.

¹⁶ EurActiv, *Turkey in the EU: What the public thinks*, EU News Policy Positions & EU Actors online, 2009.

¹⁷ O. Taspinar, *Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey*, New York: Routledge, 2005.

religion. Similarly, Turkey's accession — with approximately 80 million Turkish Muslims — according to Kramer,¹⁸ would provide a potential for the development of a genuine 'Euro-Islam'— based on mutual respect and understanding— which could further alienate Islamic radicalisation.

Differently, certain supporters of Turkish accession emphasise Turkey's economic potential as a potential asset to the EU. Although Turkey's present GDP in relation to its population size is low — unemployment in January 2009 increased by 1.59 million compared to the same period last year¹⁹ — adherents of this argument contend that Turkey's populous youthful population — compared to the EU's rapidly ageing population — would provide an excellent market for European goods and a potential source of labour.²⁰ Indeed, statistics from Eurostat revealed that since the election of the pro-European 'AKP' political party headed by Prime Minister Erdogan, Turkey's GDP growth rate from 2002 to 2007 averaged 7.4% making it one of the fastest growing economies in the world during that period.²¹

In contrast, opponents to Turkish EU membership derive their arguments primarily from the conviction that Turkey is "too big, too poor and too Muslim".²² Critics argue that Turkey's population size of approximately 75,8 million would have wide-ranging implications on the power structure within the European institutions, with Turkey sending the largest number of MEPs into the European Parliament and gaining the most dominant position in the Council.²³ Importantly, data from Eurostat 2007 predicted that if Turkey joined the EU in 2015, it would equal Germany's population of 82 million, and together they would account for 14% of the EU-28 population.²⁴ In sum, Turkey's population size and rapid growth rate would have considerable influence in the population-based European parliament which critics argue, would alter the balance of power in the EU. Moreover, sceptics to Turkey's accession assert that Turkey's low per-capita income and its significant agricultural sector — which employs about 33% of the workforce compared with about 5% of the EU-25 — would represent an enormous burden on the EU's budget particularly if major reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) were not enforced.²⁵ Evidently, an examination of Turkey's current economic demography indicates that Turkish membership would present significant challenges to the EU. With a per capita income of about 23% of the EU-15 and 27.5% of the EU-25, demographic prognosis predicts that it would take over 50 years for Turkey's income levels to equalise with those of the EU-15.²⁶ In summary, according to this analysis, Turkey's population size, low GDP and its significant agricultural sector would

¹⁸ Kramer, op.cit., pp.2-15.

¹⁹ Turkish Statistics Institute, Turkey, 2009, <<http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/OncekiGostergeler.do>>, accessed 20th May 2009.

²⁰ W. Chislett, 'Socio-Economic Arguments For and Against Turkey's EU Membership', C. Timmerman, D. Rochtus & S. Mels, op. cit.

²¹ F. Cameron, op. cit.

²² K. Kirisci, 'Is Turkey too Big, too Poor and too Different for the European Union', in C. Timmerman, D. Rochtus & S. Mels, op. cit.; Kramer, op.cit., pp.2-20; M. Ugur & N. Canefe, op.cit, pp.5-3; and Baban, op.cit., pp.1-15.

²³ EurActiv, *EU urges Turkish reform push*, EU News Policy Positions & EU Actors online, 2009.

²⁴ Chislett, op.cit.,pp.73-81.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ D. Wood & B. Yesilda, 'Institutional Dynamics in the European Union', *The Emerging European Union*, 4th ed., New York, Pearson, 2007.

complicate EU decision-making and place significant strain on the EU's regional development funds, as well as the CAP.²⁷

Moreover, the EU's 'enlargement fatigue' has also been mentioned as a reason for opposing Turkish membership. Indeed, this idea is clearly expressed in Bolkestein's book *The Limits of Europe*,²⁸ where he warns against European overstretch. Turkish accession, he argues, would reduce Europe to a glorified Customs Union and create risks for the European project. Turkey's large population size relative to its GDP would influence intra-European migration flows and thus, significantly alter the EU Parliamentary voting mechanisms creating a more Muslim Europe.²⁹ Likewise, cultural and religious arguments have been employed by certain European conservatives as the basis for countering Turkish EU membership. Proponents emphasize Turkey's predominant Islamic culture and values as significantly different as the European Union's Christian-based heritage; and thus continue to perceive Turkey's culture and religion as 'Other' and therefore a threat to the EU's values and way of life.³⁰

Three Main Approaches Regarding Turkey's Accession

The different debates — examined above — concerning Turkish accession in the EU, raise important questions including the nature of the EU entity, its future role in the international community, and how Turkey may or may not match those expectations.³¹ Will Turkey eventually join the EU? Which vision of the EU entity supports Turkey accession? Turkey's entry in the EU would have a significant symbolic impact in the Middle Eastern region as it would erode the artificial geographical divide between Europe and Turkey — a map that has often highlighted cultural differences — both real and imagined.³² However, if Turkey's admission to the EU failed, it may lend credence to a competing exclusionary vision of Europe based on putative cultural homogeneity, and thus it would in part give added weight to a vision common in European media and public opinion of a civilisational divide between Turkey and the rest of Europe.³³ In an attempt to understand the reasons underlying the different positions adopted by political elites and European citizens *vis-à-vis* Turkish European accession — discussed in the previous section — a threefold analytical approach based on 'utilitarian', 'moral' and 'ethical' arguments have been used. The three dimensions reflect a particular vision of the nature and role of the EU entity.³⁴ According to Pat Cox — President of the European Parliament during 2002-2004 — Turkey's accession in the EU will depend on how European elites define Europe. 'Utilitarians' conceive the EU as a 'problem-solving' entity and thus, decisions on enlargement are assessed according to a 'cost-

²⁷ EurActiv 2005, *Turkey accession and Cyprus*, EU News Policy Positions & EU Actors online.

²⁸ F. Bolkestein, *The Limits of Europe*, Amsterdam, Lannoo Publishers, 2007.

²⁹ C. Dahlman, 'Turkey's Accession to the European Union: The Geopolitics of Enlargement', *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, Vol.45, No.8, 2004, pp.353-574; and I. Karlsson, 'Turkey's Historical, Cultural and Religious Heritage: An Asset to the European Union?', in C. Timmerman, D. Rohtus & S. Mels, 2008, op. cit.

³⁰ EurActiv, op.cit., p.2.

³¹ Dalman, op.cit., p.554.

³² D. Kostakopoulou, *European Union Citizenship: Writing the Future*, Manchester, University of Manchester Press, 1998.

³³ Baban, op.cit, pp.1-11.

³⁴ H. Sjursen, op. cit.

benefit analysis'.³⁵ In comparison, 'moralists' see the EU as a 'value-based' geographically delimited entity where members share a strong sense of common identity, history, culture and traditions. According to this interpretation, decisions on enlargement are based on 'we-feelings' and/or 'kinship' and thus, the more a candidate is like the Member States in terms of geography, culture, history, the more likely its application will be supported. Finally, advocates of a 'rights-based' post-national EU entity, claim that universal principles and values including democracy, human rights and the rule of law, form the basis for a collective sense of identity and belonging. In this respect, the prospect of enlargement depends on the extent to which candidate countries share those values regardless of a high degree of cultural differences and traditions.³⁶ From the three 'ideal conceptions' of the EU entity mentioned above, three hypotheses can be drawn:

H1 'Instrumental' support: The more Turkey accession is considered beneficial, the higher the support will be for accession; conversely, the more costly accession is perceived, the higher the opposition will be to enlargement.³⁷

H2 'Identity' support: The more European citizens believe Turkey is part of Europe in terms of geography, history, and culture, the more they will support Turkish accession and vice versa.³⁸

H3 'Post-national' support: The more importance citizens assign to the set of shared principles on which the Union is based, and which conform to the enlargement *acquis*, the more likely their level of support for or opposition to Turkish membership will depend on whether they think Turkey meets or is in a position to meet these criteria.³⁹

Recent academic research including Dahlman's examination on the geopolitically implications of Turkish membership, Sjursen's investigation on the factors underlining European elites decision to accept or reject applicant countries into the EU, and Kubicek's analysis on the challenges and opportunities Turkish accession would bring to the EU entity, demonstrates that resistance to Turkish membership comes primarily from fears of the socio-economic consequences of Turkish membership as well as, the religious-cultural differences that exist between Turkey and the EU-27 member-states.⁴⁰ More specifically, those who oppose Turkish membership are more likely to adopt a 'value-based' idea of the EU entity while proponents to Turkish membership perceive the EU as a predominantly 'right-based' post-national entity. Within this context, the question of whether Turkey will eventually attain full membership in the EU will largely

³⁵ Ibid., pp.1-17.

³⁶ P. Kubicek, 'Turkish Accession to the European Union: Challenges and Opportunities for the New Europe', Oakland University, USA, 2005..

³⁷ Ruiz-Jimenez & Torreblanca, op. cit., p.4.

³⁸ Ibid., p.5.

³⁹ Ibid., p.6.

⁴⁰ Dalman, op.cit., pp.353-574; H. Sjursen, op. cit.; and Kubicek, op.cit., pp.1-15.

depend on how Europeans perceive the nature and future of the European Union in the global community.⁴¹

Who is “For” and “Against” Turkey Accession?

The European Commission has generally been a proponent for Turkish accession to the European Union. Despite several setbacks including the partial suspension of Turkish EU accession negotiations in December 2006 following Turkey's refusal to open its ports and airports to ships and planes from Cyprus, as well as, the appointment of two EU leaders — French President, Nicholas Sarkozy and German Chancellor, Angela Merkel — who are highly critical of Turkey's full EU membership, the Barroso Commission has undertaken constructive initiatives regarding EU-Turkey negotiations.⁴² In 2007, following the election victory of the pro-Islamic ‘AKP’ political party headed by Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan, Barroso congratulated Erdogan stating that:

This comes at an important moment for the people of Turkey as the country moves forward with political and economic reforms. Prime Minister Erdogan has given his personal commitment to the sustained movement towards the EU. I wish him every success with his new mandate.⁴³

Similarly, in response to Abdullah’s Gul’s victory as President of the Republic of Turkey, Javier Solana — EU High Representative for the CFSP — personally telephoned Gul stating the European Commission’s continuing support in Turkish accession progress:

I would like to wish you every success in your new tasks and challenges. I am confident that your strong commitment and dedication as well as your highly valuable experience as Foreign Minister will be extremely helpful in this regard, and will contribute to broadening the reform process in Turkey and to strengthening regional stability. The European Union will continue to support you in these efforts...⁴⁴

Moreover, the Commission’s publication of yearly progress reports on Turkey is evidence of the European Commission’s willingness to consider Turkey’s membership.⁴⁵ Furthermore, in January 2009, following a meeting in Brussels between Erdogan and the President of EU Commission, Barroso congratulated the country for its recent progress which, in December 2008, had led to the opening of two new chapters in accession negotiations. In particular, Barroso described the recent inauguration of a television channel broadcast entirely in Kurdish as a “historic development” for Turkey. Nevertheless, he encouraged Prime Minister Erdogan to pursue this work by re-launching reforms for modernising the country and by making progress on the Cypriot

⁴¹ F. Keyman & F. Baban, ‘Turkey and the Postnational Europe: Challenges for the Emerging Political Community’, paper presented to the Annual Meeting of International Studies Association, San Diego, USA, 2006.

⁴² EurActiv, op.cit., pp.2-6.

⁴³ EurActiv 2007, *Olli Rehn: Turkey membership ‘vital’ for EU*, EU News Policy Positions & EU Actors online, pp.1-2.

⁴⁴ Europa, ‘Delegation of the European Union to Turkey’, Turkey, 2007,

<http://www.avrupa.info.tr/News_Archive/Agu_2007,29agu_3.html>, accessed 12th June 2009.

⁴⁵ T. Oguzlu, ‘How to Interpret Turkey’s Accession Process with the European Union? A Clash of Discourses’, *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol.7, No. 3, pp.1-19.

question. Finally, President Barroso expressed his wish to see Turkey playing a key role in the energy issue by helping Europe to diversify its resources.⁴⁶ Finally, in March 2009, President Barroso received President Gül at the Commission's headquarters in Brussels; again, Barroso stressed the Commission's full commitment to a constructive accession of negotiations:

Turkey and the EU have a long-term strategic bond. Security of energy supplies, the fight against terrorism, the global economic crisis, stability in the southern Caucasus, the Middle East peace process, just to mention a number of key issues on which we have common interests and where it is very much in the interest of the EU to work together with Turkey, and I believe also of Turkey to work together with the EU.

Furthermore, the Turkish Government has also supported Turkey's EU membership. Since August 2002, the Turkish parliament has made a number of important legal and constitutional changes to ameliorate Turkish democracy in accordance with the level of democracy in Europe.⁴⁷ The 2003 election victory of the Turkish PM, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and the subsequent appointment of the pro-EU Islamist 'Justice and Development Party' 'AKP' in 2007, reinforced Turkey's commitment to the European integration project. Turkey's active commitment towards becoming a member of the EU was reintegrated by Erdogan who claimed that "European values [are] Ankara's values".⁴⁸ In light of the significant cultural-religious arguments presented by EU elites and citizens against Turkish membership, Turkish adherents have countered such arguments by implicitly opting for a 'right-based' post-national conception of the EU. Indeed, in a speech presented to the European Commission in 2004, Erdogan stated that the EU needed Turkey for several reasons:

Turkey's strategic importance of the Eastern Mediterranean ... Turkey's full membership will re-enforce the desire and will for the co-habitation between Christians and Muslims ... The EU must recognise that it is a 'union of values', not a narrowly-defined geography or a union of rigidity.⁴⁹

Despite general enthusiasm among EU and Turkish elites, the 2008 Eurobarometer poll showed that opposition to Turkey's EU membership among the EU population has risen steadily over the last decade, with over 50% of the European public opposing Turkish admission in the EU in 2005.⁵⁰ What are the reasons for the extremely low levels of support for the prospect of Turkey's accession to the EU? Media and political discourses tend to point at different factors. The immediate and possible personal consequences of the enlargement process — job loss and the weakening of national cultures — are prominent factors which deter the European public towards supporting Turkish accession; meanwhile, the long-term benefits of Turkish membership — a boost in European economy and a stronger foreign policy particularly in terms of energy are impersonal and strategic long-term advantages and thus, have little impact on

⁴⁶ J. Barroso, 'Press Speaking Points: Meeting with Abdullah Gul, President of Turkey', Brussels, 26 March, pp.1-2.

⁴⁷ Keyman & Baban, *op.cit.*, p.1.

⁴⁸ EurActiv, *op.cit.*, pp.3-5.

⁴⁹ EurActiv, *op.cit.*, pp.4-7.

⁵⁰ K. Barysch, 'What Europeans Think about Turkey and Why', Centre for European Reform, London, 2005.

influencing the European public.⁵¹ Moreover, European public attitudes on Turkish accession are largely formulated according to how an individual understands the future role of the EU entity as well as, how one conceives Turkey's accession whether as a question of foreign policy — as is the case for Spain and the UK — or primarily as a matter of internal EU or national politics — such as in France and Germany. The European public in France, Germany, Italy and Austria fear that Turkey's EU membership would signal the end of the federalists' dream of a political union as envisaged by the French protagonists Jean Monnet and Jacques Delors.⁵² In contrast, the British public — who since their accession in 1973 have overtly favoured economic integration over political integration — view Turkish accession more positively and focus on the ways in which Turkey's accession would benefit the EU economically and geo-strategically. Indeed, in September 2007, the former UK Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, stated that the EU “needs, as a clear goal, the inclusion of Turkey as a full member”. Importantly, to understand the UK's strong support for Turkey EU membership, it is vital to highlight the fact that Turkey is a significant trading partner to the UK; in 2002, Britain was Turkey's largest export destination and the sixth largest import source.⁵³ Finally, the 2008 Eurobarometer poll showed that supporters for Turkish accession adopted a predominantly ‘rights-based’ post-national vision of the EU while opponents to Turkish EU membership adopted a ‘value-based’ vision of the EU. Importantly, what these findings reveal is that the more the discourse on Turkey focuses on issues of culture, religion and identity, the more likely it is that support for Turkish membership will remain low; on the other hand, the more the discussion about Turkey is held and justified along post-national arguments, the more likely support for Turkish accession will be high.⁵⁴

The prospect of Turkish EU membership, has received significant opposition among French and German elites. In order to understand scepticism towards Turkish accession, national debates must be analysed. According to Veron cultural differences and the future balance of power in the enlarged Union are significant factors fuelling French opposition.⁵⁵ The fact that France struggles to integrate its sizeable Muslim minority — the largest in Europe — has burdened the accession debate. These concerns are reinforced by the French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, who, during an interview with Charlie Rose — an American television interviewer and journalist — discussed the reasons behind his opposition to Turkey's Membership in the European Union. Turkey's geographical location — “Turkey is not in Europe, Turkey is in Asia Minor” — as well as its prominent Muslim culture — “Turkey has a different civilisational culture” — are prominent arguments presented by Sarkozy.⁵⁶ Importantly, data from EurActiv revealed that among French people, and politicians in particular, there is a wide belief that their country's role in Europe has already weakened by previous enlargements and Turkey's

⁵¹ Ibid., p.2.

⁵² EurActiv, op.cit., pp.1-9.

⁵³ EurActiv, op.cit., pp.1-6.

⁵⁴ A. Ruiz-Jimenez & J. Torreblanca, op.cit., pp.23-24.

⁵⁵ Barysch, op.cit., p.3.

⁵⁶ Youtube, ‘Nicolas Sarkozy Talks With Charlie Rose’, France, 2007, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7TrNZremC_s>, accessed 23rd October 2008.

accession would further dilute its influence.⁵⁷ Similarly, Germany's issues on immigration and integration are also key ingredients fomenting opposition to Turkish membership. Germany is home to three million Turkish immigrants, many of whom do not come from Turkey's modern cities and region but from the backward south east regions of Turkey.⁵⁸ Consequently, many Turkish immigrants have remained largely traditionalist and have failed to integrate in German society; indeed, since 1996, forty-five honour killings by Turks on German soil have taken place. This in turn, has resulted in more than 90% of Germans' to believe that Islam is hostile and aggressive to women.⁵⁹ German Chancellor, Angela Merkel's critical position towards Turkish EU membership is articulated in her 'defence of *pacta sunt servanda*' presented in 2006:

Turkey has been promised EU accession negotiations by a former German Government...while the CDU and I personally prefer a privileged partnership of Turkey to membership, we are still reliable partners... there should not be new promises on EU accession beyond the Balkans... we have to primarily focus on better EU integration in the face of recent enlargement rounds now...⁶⁰

In summary, when analysing the arguments presented by the current French President, Nicolas Sarkozy and the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, against Turkish EU membership, it is evident that France and Germany have adopted a 'value-based' interpretation of the EU. Instead of encouraging Turkey EU membership, Merkel and Sarkozy propose a "privileged partnership" between Turkey and the EU which would enable the EU and Turkey to make the most out of economic advantages while limiting the impact of cultural and religious tensions.

US Support for Turkey's EU Membership

Unlike Germany and France, the United States has been a strong supporter for Turkish membership in the European Union since the beginning of EU-Turkish relations. Academic research on the motives underlining America's proactive support for Turkey EU membership reveals that Turkish-EU relations are seen largely through the prism of America's broader strategic interests.⁶¹ Indeed, during the Cold War, Turkey served as a bulwark against Soviet expansion to the Middle East and Mediterranean regions. Specifically, American scholars emphasise the fact that Turkey provided important facilities for monitoring Soviet compliance with arms control agreements. Moreover, Washington's support for Turkey's EU aspirations is demonstrated in their intensive lobbying efforts with key US allies — predominantly the UK — throughout the 1990s.⁶² Washington lobbied hard for the Customs Union in 1995 and for Turkey getting candidate status at Helsinki in 1999. Since 9/11, Turkey's role as a secular Muslim

⁵⁷ EurActiv, op.cit., p.4.

⁵⁸ EurActiv, op.cit., pp.3-4.

⁵⁹ Barysch, op.cit, p.4.

⁶⁰ A. Merkel, 'The German Turkey Debate Under: The Grand Coalition: State of the Debate', *ESI European Stability Initiative*, Germany, 2006.

⁶¹ S. Larrabee, 'American Perspectives on Turkey and Turkish-EU Relations', *AICGS*, John Hopkins University, 2004, <http://www.aicgs.org/analysis/c/larrabee_turkey.aspx>, accessed 23rd October 2009.

⁶² S. Sayari, 'The United States and Turkey's membership in the European Union', *The Turkish YearBook*, 2003, pp.168-176.

democracy has taken on increased importance in US policy. Turkey has become the 'poster child' for the administration's effort to promote democracy in the Middle East through its initiative for the Broader Middle Eastern and North African region.⁶³ Washington's emphasis on Turkey's strategic importance was reiterated in 2005 by American analysts who claimed that cementing Turkey's Western orientation and democratic political culture in the European Union would ensure the future strategic cooperation between the United States, Europe and Turkey. Similarly, in 2007, the *Turkish Weekly*⁶⁴ stated that Turkey's entry to the EU would be critical for securing Turkey firmly to the West and defusing Huntington's notion of a "Clash of Civilisations". In January 2008, George W. Bush stated that Turkey would act as a counterweight to fundamentalist Islam and would thus serve as a bridge between the West and the Islamic world. In April 2009, — during a news conference with Turkish President, Abdullah Gul — President Obama urged Turkey to help bridge the gap between the Muslim and Western worlds and stated that a stable and democratic Turkey was important for both the United States and to the world: "Turkey's future is in the European Union".⁶⁵

Role of European Parliament

Throughout the past decade, the European Parliament (EP) has become a key player in the European enlargement process. During the negotiation process, the EP has an important monitoring role. The EP's Committee on Foreign Affairs is responsible for coordinating the work on enlargement and ensuring consistency between the positions adopted by the Parliament and the activities of its Specialist Committees, as well as those of the Joint Parliamentary Committees.⁶⁶ The EP's most significant power in the enlargement process is to give its assent — Article 49 TEU — before any country joins the EU. This power is exercised only at the final stage once the negotiations have been completed. Moreover, as one of the two arms of the budgetary authority of the EU, the EP plays a predominant role with regard to the financial aspects of accession.⁶⁷ As well as adopting resolutions on the progress of the candidates, the preparations and the conclusions of the European Council, the EP is involved in the following: MEPs meet on a regular basis with their counterparts from the candidate countries within the Joint Parliamentary Committees (JPC). The JPC meetings take place twice a year in order to exercise parliamentary oversight on all aspects of bilateral relations, and to examine in detail the progress in the accession preparation and negotiations. Furthermore, the various Specialist Committees of the EP are increasingly involved in monitoring the progress of negotiations in the policy areas for which they are responsible and the administrative capacity of the candidates to implement the EU *acquis*. Indeed, many

⁶³ Larrabee, op.cit.

⁶⁴ N. Danforth, 'A US Perspective on Turkish-EU Relations', *Turkish Weekly*, July 16, 2007, <<http://www.turkishweekly.net/op-ed/2262/america-s-perspective-on-turkish-eu-relations.html>> pp.1-4, accessed 25th April, 2009

⁶⁵ *Spiegel* Online, 'Obama Bashing in Bavaria and Paris', 2009, <<http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/0,1518,druck-617868,00.html>>, accessed 25th April 2009.

⁶⁶ The EP has 20 standing Committees which are designed to aid the European Commission in initiating legislation. The Committees reflect the political makeup of the entire EP (F. Cameron, op. cit.).

⁶⁷ European Parliament, '2003 Regular Report on Turkey's progress towards accession', Brussels, 2003, <http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives/pdf/key_documents/2003/rr_tk_final_en.pdf>.

committees have sent delegations on fact-finding missions to a number of the candidate countries and have organised hearings on specific issues. Moreover, within the Secretariat of the EP, the division responsible for the work with National parliaments co-operates regularly with its counterparts in the candidate countries.⁶⁸ Thus, it is evident that the EP plays a significant role in the enlargement process.⁶⁹ Importantly, through the Lisbon Treaty — currently waiting ratification — the European Parliament's legislative, budgetary and political influence will be extended thus, the EP's role in the European enlargement process will be extended and reinforced.⁷⁰

Future Prospects for Turkish Accession

The question of Turkish accession presents the EU with many challenges and opportunities and raises significant questions about the nature of the EU entity and about its future role in the international community in the 21st century. If Turkey is admitted to the European Union, it could serve as model for the Middle Eastern countries by demonstrating that democracy and Islam are not antagonists. Furthermore, Turkish membership would also reinforce the idea of the European Union as an entity that is built on the recognition of universal rights and values as oppose to exclusionary ideas of cultural and religious homogeneity. Several factors, including an individuals or member states understanding of the future role of the EU in the international community; a country's positive or negative experience with immigrants; and the actual/perceived economic, political, social and cultural benefits Turkey accession could bring to the EU, have been identified as influencing individuals and Member States' support or opposition to Turkey EU membership. The question of whether Turkey will attain full membership in the EU will largely depend on how individuals understand the nature and future of the European Union in the global community. The more the discourse on Turkey focuses on issues of culture, religion and identity, the more likely it is that support for Turkish membership will remain low. On the other hand, the more the discussion about Turkey accession is held and justified along post-national arguments, the more likely support for Turkish accession will be high. Finally, in light of the recent Central/Eastern European enlargement, as well a, the current global financial crisis, the EU Member-States should focus on devising appropriate mechanisms to respond effectively to these challenges while continuing negotiation process with Turkey.

⁶⁸ European Parliament, op. cit., pp.1-3.

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp.1-3.

⁷⁰ Y. Devuyt, 'The European Union's Institutional Balance After the Treaty of Lisbon: Community Method and Democratic Deficit Reassessed', *Georgetown Journal of International Law*, Vol.39, No.2, 2008, pp.247-326.

Stepping Through the Mirror: A Dystopian Vision of Regression and Stagnation in Tatyana Tolstaya's *The Slynx*.

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Abstract

In her novel 'The Slynx', Tatyana Tolstaya creates a dystopian world of regression and stagnation to critically reflect upon the historical patterns of Russia. By interweaving the phantasmagorical with the real, she uses fiction as a vehicle to meditate upon the cycles of progress and degeneration that have plagued Russian history. In lieu of mere social criticism, Tolstaya's literary dystopia links the abstract world of fiction with the contemporary post-communist context of her writing, as a means to ruminate on the future direction of Russia at a time when the nation is at a crossroads. 'The Slynx' thus illustrates not only the disorder of trying to rebuild society after communism, but exposes also how the turmoil of modern Russian society is intrinsically linked to deep-rooted traditions of autocracy and dehumanisation. Subsequently, she emphasises that these customs are not simply imposed upon people from a top-down system of oppression, but ascertains that they are propagated from within the Russian consciousness to form an eternal and ineradicable component of the Russian psyche.

The literary representation of a 'utopian idea' is a powerful speculative tool for social critique.² The same may be said of the literary dystopia, insofar as it too relies on the power of the "literary imagination"³ to proclaim its message in a vividly powerful way. In her novel *The Slynx*,⁴ Tatyana Tolstaya creates a dystopian world to reflect upon various aspects of Russian history and culture. Yet her intent is not to highlight flaws in a particular utopian ideal, or even to create an explicit allegory of a specified political system or époque in Russian history. Rather, her creation of a world composed of both phantasmagorical and mundane elements, low cultural forms and highbrow Russian literary allusions becomes an alternate dimension from which one can critically examine the historical patterns of Russia. By interweaving the fantastic with the real, she uses fiction as a way to meditate upon the cyclical nature of progress and degeneration that has plagued Russian history, the enduring legacy of autocracy in Russian politics, and the seemingly perpetual stagnation of the nation. Additionally, she uses the text to consider the ways in which these motifs of Russian history have evidenced in the post-communist context of her writing. Therefore, in lieu of mere social criticism, Tolstaya's literary dystopia links the abstract world of fiction with the concrete world of real life to

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² K. Kumar, 'Utopia and Anti-Utopia in the Twentieth Century', in *Utopia: The Search for the Ideal Society in the Western World* in Roland Schaer, Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent (eds.), New York, Oxford University Press in association with the New York Public Library, 2000, p.251.

³ Op. cit., p.252.

⁴ T. Tolstaya, *The Slynx*, translated by Jamey Gambrell, New York, New York Review of Books, 2003.

allow her to ruminate on the direction of Russia at a time when the nation is at a crossroads. She reflects on Russian history by rendering a compelling illustration of the recurring themes of stasis and regression that have thus far governed Russian experience, while concurrently warning of the ruinous effect a perpetuation of these patterns would have on Russia's growth in the future.

Reading *The Slynx* as a dystopia, as opposed to a distinct allegory of a particular époque, allows one to critically reflect on more perennial aspects of Russian history and culture. One critic has declared the allegorical elements within the text as a "transparent" allusion to Soviet times, and indeed there are certain textual representations that are considerably emblematic of this period.⁵ To only read the text in this way, however, is restrictive as it neglects to consider its speculative and critical function. It is perhaps more appropriate to view the text as a canvas onto which Tolstaya projects figurative elements of Russian life in order to bring them under heightened scrutiny. Furthermore, as Karen Ryan-Hayes contends, for a dystopia to be effectively critical, recognisable links between the world described and the author's own social and historical situation must be drawn.⁶ It is thus pertinent to consider Tolstaya's own context of post-Soviet Russia⁷ as the impetus for her writing, and the text as a medium for critiquing the manner in which the conventions of post-communism impact upon the everyday lives of ordinary Russian people.

There are key aspects of the Russian post-communist experience that manifest themselves in *The Slynx*. As Helena Goscilo indicates, the diminishing living standards, the prominence of a "corrupt self serving oligarchy", the marginalisation of high culture, and the "cultural and political chaos that blighted Russia's nineties" are all elements that are present within in the text.⁸ It is important to note, however, that Tolstaya does not just include these aspects to illustrate life in a post-communist society. She satirises them in such a way to offer a subtle, yet vehement critique of their impact upon Russia and its people. For example, the government's corruption in the bureaucratic tax and payment system of Fyodor Kuzmichsk, as described by Benedikt, is both preposterous and comical. To collect wages, one must bend down to a tiny window, humbling to the "Paymaster Murza" who sits behind.⁹ (Receiving the wage itself is made a difficult task – necessitating that one squeeze their hand through a tiny dark slot – to increase the odds of very few "chits" (currency) being grasped at all.¹⁰ Tax collection, conversely, is relatively efficient. The wide and spacious window of the "Tax Murza" facilitates a much easier transfer of money, with the tax amount of six and a half chits always rounded up

⁵ For example, Alla Latynina suggests that the 'Blast' in the text is illustrative of the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, and such depictions as the warehouses where 'meager goodies are doled out on special days' and the fearful KGB-esque 'Saniturations' are simply symbolic representations of life under Communism. See Alla Latynina "There's Your Spiritual Renaissance for You": On Tatyana Tolstaya's *The Slynx*, *Russian Studies in Literature*, 39, 2003, p.69 for further examples of this interpretation.

⁶ K. L. Ryan-Hayes, *Contemporary Russian Satire: A Genre Study*, Cambridge, New York and Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 202.

⁷ Tolstaya began writing the novel in 1986, the year of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in Ukraine and continued through the early post-Communist years to finish in 2000.

⁸ H. Goscilo, 'Dystopian Dreams,' *The Women's Review of Books*, 20, 2003, p.10.

⁹ T. Tolstaya, *The Slynx*, op. cit., p.78.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.77.

to seven, because “you can’t tear a chit in half”.¹¹ Yet despite the obviousness of this legitimised government rort, Tolstaya’s real criticism of it lies not in its mere representation, but rather in Benedikt’s nonchalant acceptance of its absolute ludicrousness. As he casually acknowledges that this is “what government service means”,¹² he represents the inclination of many people in post-communist Russia to tolerate without question the increasingly bureaucratic and unjust nature of Russian politics and culture.¹³ Olga Shevchenko observes in her study of Post-Soviet life that in the “midst of chaos and dissatisfaction that could have easily brought about a revolution from below”, ordinary Russians continued to live and withstand “not only the economic hardships, but also the moral and psychological pressures of the time.”¹⁴ Through Benedikt’s failure to question the established order, which is satirised to highlight its irresponsibility and ineptitude, Tolstaya alludes to the detrimental effects of apathy in a society where escalating material difficulties have considerably increased hardship.

It is relevant at this point to consider the legacy of communism in post-communist society. As Shöpflin points out, “an overwhelming majority of those involved in state administration under post-communism acquired their bureaucratic habits under the culture of communism.”¹⁵ Furthermore, despite the collapse of communism, post-communist society was a far cry from a clean slate as a considerable amount of baggage from the past seemed “deeply and often subconsciously internalised” within the citizens themselves.¹⁶ Tolstaya represents this lingering communist echo in her text as a kind of intrinsic backwardness within the people that keeps them and their society locked in a world of stasis. She parodies this through Benedikt’s blind reliance on, and repetition of various habits and superstitions of which he himself has no clear understanding. When Benedikt leaves for work one morning, he sets a wood beam across the front of the door to his izba and bolsters it with a stick.¹⁷ He muses that even though there is nothing to steal in his izba, he does this out of habit because his Mother, an “Oldener” born before the Blast, told him how people of her time used to do the same. Benedikt continues, noting that “now the whole settlement lock[s] their doors with sticks”.¹⁸ This illustration is not only emblematic of the reliance on residual habits from an outdated mode of existence, but the very idiocy of the obviously misinterpreted act itself – locking a door from the outside with a stick that anyone can remove – highlights the fact that the people are completely unaware of their own backwardness and ignorance. Tolstaya uses this example of misinterpretation, and blind faith in superstition and habit, to express her concern over the future of a society that clings to conventions of a bygone era. Although communism may have passed, its legacy is still a haunting feature of post-communist society – both within the policies of the government and the hearts of people

¹¹ Ibid., p.79.

¹² Ibid., p.78.

¹³ See G. Schöpflin, ‘The condition of Post-Communism’, in *Politics in Eastern Europe: 1945-1992*, Oxford, Cambridge, Blackwell, 1993, for an overview of increasing bureaucratisation in Post-Soviet Russian society.

¹⁴ O. Shevchenko, ‘Bread and Circuses: Shifting Frames and Changing References in Ordinary Muscovites’ political talk’, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 34, No.1, 2001, p.80.

¹⁵ Schöpflin, op. cit., p.280.

¹⁶ L. Holmes, *Post-Communism: An Introduction*, Cambridge, Oxford, Polity Press in association with Blackwell, 1997, p.16.

¹⁷ T. Tolstaya, *The Slynx*, op. cit., pp.3-4.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.4.

themselves.¹⁹ Tolstaya thus fears that this reliance on communist instrumentality in post-communist society will stunt Russia's ability to progress in the future.²⁰

Reading *The Slynx* as a dystopia allows the reader to view the ways in which Tolstaya critiques elements of her own post-communist society. Yet as it has also been suggested, rather than writing a “run-of-the mill” dystopia, she has created a parody of the genre.²¹ This is true to the extent that despite the associations with post-communism as previously discussed, the text also conveys timelessness by scrambling temporal layers.²² Tolstaya's parody of the dystopian style illustrates that the text does not just reflect on a specific era in Russia history, but seeks to emphasise the impact of more enduring aspects of Russian culture. Ryan-Hayes asserts that according to the prescriptive pattern of literary dystopias, the traditional dystopian plot features an attempt to subvert or destroy a sociopolitical situation that is despotic and oppressive.²³ However in *The Slynx*, while the “cult of personality”²⁴ ruler Fyodor Kuzmich could certainly be viewed as a despot – issuing decrees at whim and modelling himself as an “omniscient” leader²⁵ – his depiction by the author as a tiny dwarf²⁶ that “squeals” and “scampers under a bookcase” when confronted with a potential coup²⁷ lampoons this form of leadership otherwise closely aligned with figures such as Stalin or the old Tsars.²⁸

Furthermore, rather than an attempt to “subvert” or “destroy” the autocratic rule, as Ryan-Hayes expects of a dystopian text, the successful overthrow of Kuzmich by Benedikt's equally as despotic father-in-law results in nothing more than a perpetuation of totalitarian rule.²⁹ As a result, Tolstaya is able to criticise the repetitive nature of leadership that has plagued both communism and post-communism,³⁰ and likewise, denounce the various forms of despotic leadership that have prevailed during numerous

¹⁹ L. Holmes, *Post-Communism: An Introduction*, op. cit.

²⁰ Indeed, this theme has been expressed before in Russian literature. In his novel *Once Upon the River Love*, Andrei Makine depicts an old Russified Chinese man who tells the story of a man in communist society who raises wolf-cubs – their paws bound by wire to impede them ever from walking – for the rewards paid on their pelts. After killing the cubs and receiving the bounty for their fleece, the man buys vodka to celebrate, drinks too much, and dies. The story becomes an image of the absurdity of life under communist instrumentality, whereby those who cling to communist conventions are doomed to go nowhere. Similarly, the wolves, representing Russia, are stunted from birth due to the nature of these practices and condemned to never grow strong as they should. See A. Makine, *Once Upon the River Love*, translated by Geoffrey Strachan, New York, Arcade Publishing, 1998, pp.140-141.

²¹ N. Ivanova ‘Grind the Peacock into Burkers: On Tatyana Tolstaya's *The Slynx*’, *Russian Studies in Literature*, Vol. 39, No. 4, 2003, p.74.

²² Goscilo, op. cit., p.10.

²³ Ryan-Hayes, op. cit., p.228.

²⁴ Goscilo, op. cit., p.10.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ T. Tolstaya, *The Slynx*, op. cit., p.157.

²⁷ Ibid., p.271.

²⁸ Richard Eder neatly sums up the satire behind this parody by describing Fyodor Kuzmich as “part Stalin, part Wizard of Oz”. See R. Eder, ‘Breathing Fire: Tatyana Tolstaya on Russia Past and Present’, *New York Times Book Review*, January 26, 2003, p. 19.

²⁹ Goscilo, op. cit., p.10.

³⁰ Eric Hanley, Natasha Yershova, and Richard Anderson have coined the term “old wine in a new bottle” to describe the extent to which Russian elites have been reproduced across generations. They state with reference to the communist and post-communist context: “there is more continuity than discontinuity between the nomenklatura that dominated the Soviet Union in 1988 and the elites that rule over Russia today”. See E. Hanley, N. Yershova and R. Anderson, ‘Russia – Old Wine in a New Bottle? The Circulation and Reproduction of Russian Elites: 1983-1993’, *Theory and Society*, Vol. 24, No.5, 1995, p.641.

stages of Russian history. The legacy of autocracy is one with roots that reach deep into the Russian past,³¹ and consequently it is through this inversion of the traditional dystopian plot that Tolstaya condemns its continuation through communist and post-communist society.

Many literary dystopias serve as a mirror; by reflecting on the negative effects of a utopian realisation – most likely a totalitarian society – the dystopia discredits the idealism of utopian thinking.³² Yet the world portrayed in *The Slynx* differs considerably from this paradigm. Its bizarre, otherworldly society seems completely removed from any kind of familiar reality, and the reader feels as if they have stepped *through* the mirror to the perverted other side, like Alice does in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*.³³ Tolstaya's creation of this tangent world, a distortion of the traditional dystopian form, allows her to explore in greater detail the notion of 'backwardness,' that I have previously noted. Alla Latynina asserts that underlying most classical dystopias is a "conflict that pits the principle of the individual against a faceless instrument that is seeking to repress all individuality".³⁴ However, it becomes clear that Benedikt, the individual, does not find a faceless inhuman technological power structure operating. As Tolstaya demonstrates, the operations of power and processes of dehumanisation occur instead within the individual himself and also within the broader traditions of Russian culture. For example, Benedikt's obsession with books and reading does not pave the way to an enlightenment of any sort. Rather, it generates within him a tyrannical misanthropy that leads him to abuse and even kill others in order to acquire their books. The situation is laced with satire as Benedikt equates nursery rhymes with the same profundity as classical Russian poetry and literature³⁵, or relates a book about knitting to the concept of freedom.³⁶ It thus becomes evident that, although Benedikt can dimly understand the power of literature, he is unable to evaluate its worth because he comes from a society that is largely illiterate.³⁷ Consequently, it is from this backwardness, represented by Benedikt's inability to engage critically with the books he consumes, that Tolstaya sees the growth of totalitarianism and dehumanisation. Her parody of the conventional dystopian form emphasises that the failure to question or engage with the political sphere – a particularly potent issue in post-Soviet Russian society³⁸ – does not only perpetuate despotism imposed from leadership, but perhaps more dangerously, generates and nurtures it within Russian people *themselves* through their apathy.

³¹ The traditions of autocratic rule stem from Byzantine tradition and the doctrine of Caesaropapism (whereby the ruler is both Prince and Priest) of Emperor Justinian in the 6th century, and continued under the Tsars of the Russian state from Ivan the Great (fifteenth century) through to the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 which removed the last Tsar, Nicholas II from the throne. See T. Szamuely, 'Part 1: The Russian State Tradition', in *The Russian Tradition*, London, Martin Secker & Walburg Limited, 1974, pp. 3-139 for a more detailed discussion on this point. There is also evidence to suggest that the autocratic tradition has continued to live on in Russian rulers throughout the last century. See R. G. Wesson, 'The Soviet State, Ideology and Patterns of Autocracy', *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 20, No.1, 1968, pp. 179-186, pp. 179-186 for further details on this point.

³² Ryan-Hayes, op. cit., pp.200-202.

³³ L. Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass*, Camberwell, Penguin, 1998.

³⁴ Latynina, op. cit., p. 70.

³⁵ T. Tolstaya, *The Slynx*, op. cit., p.201,

³⁶ As Benedikt quotes from the book 'Plaiting and Knitting', he states: "when knitting the armhole, we cast on two extra loops for freedom of movement" (Ibid., 213).

³⁷ M. Deyrup, 'The Slynx: A novel by Tatyana Tolstaya; Jamie Gambrell/Pushkin's Children: Writings on Russia and Russians by Tatyana Tolstaya; Jamie Gambrell', *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol.48, No.1, 2004, p. 126..

³⁸ See Shevchenko, op. cit., pp.80, 83, and 88 for examples of such apathy towards the government in post-Soviet society.

This idea of regression and dehumanisation can be extended further. While Tolstaya certainly draws links to her own post-communist context,³⁹ the notion of an authoritarian attitude that is bred unconsciously from within the Russian people is something that she also sees as emblematic of Russian culture. In her book *Pushkin's Children*,⁴⁰ Tolstaya uses the terms “Great Terror” and “Little Terror” to explain her approach to Russian history. Where the “Great Terror” is the palpable manifestation of oppression and brutality imposed upon the Russian people by historical figures such as Stalin or Ivan the Terrible,⁴¹ the “Little Terror” is the essence of this materialisation, an enduring entity that has existed in Russian culture since time immemorial.⁴² She describes this “Little Terror” as something permanent. It lurks dormant beneath the surface for periods of time, arises to wreak havoc, and then descends once again to linger within the depths of Russia’s collective subconscious.⁴³ Through this understanding, Tolstaya contends that ordinary Russian people are therefore not apolitical, but rather, carry inside themselves the seeds of totalitarianism and destruction. The Neolithic-style backwardness⁴⁴ of the people in *The Slynx* does not just represent the consequence of indifference towards a particular government or set of bureaucratic habits, but also illustrates the way in which this “Little Terror” condemns Russia to cycles of stagnation and regression. Tolstaya confesses the difficulties in representing this concept, as she states:

The backward notion of history, the submersion of culture under a thick layer of gilded, decorative ‘Asiatic Savagery’, government piracy, guile elevated to principle, unbridled caprice, extraordinary lack of will all combined with an impulsive cruelty... a blind, superstitious belief in the spoken, and especially written word... How can all this be described, how can one give a sense of the ocean from which the huge wave of Great Terror periodically rises?⁴⁵

The reader, however, gets a sense that through *The Slynx* this is exactly what she is trying to describe. It is illustrated in the way that the tyrant Fyodor Kuzmich plagiarises the works of Russian literary greats and passes them off as his own. It is manifest in the cruel and abusive games that the people play on one another, and in the way they then laugh at the consequential injuries of others.⁴⁶ It is exemplified through the inherent yet unrealised backwardness of the people, as “superstition, dread, oblivion and illiteracy form the base of society.”⁴⁷ Consequently, the depiction of all these aspects in *The Slynx* is Tolstaya’s attempt to exemplify the social and psychological effects of the “Little Terror” within Russian consciousness. Furthermore, as the society in the text is illustrated as one that allegorises aspects of Tolstaya’s own post-communist experience,

³⁹ Goscilo, op. cit., pp.10.

⁴⁰ T. Tolstaya, *Pushkin's Children*, translated by Jamey Gambrell, New York and Boston, Houghton Mifflin Books, 2003.

⁴¹ Ibid., p.17.

⁴² Ibid., p.15.

⁴³ Ibid., pp.15-17.

⁴⁴ Goscilo, op. cit., p.10.

⁴⁵ Tolstaya, op. cit., p.17.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.133.

⁴⁷ Goscilo, op. cit., p.10.

yet simultaneously resembles a “larval level of existence”,⁴⁸ it is demonstrated that she fears this “terror” as something eternal and ineradicable in Russian history.

Ultimately, Tolstaya uses the text to critique this cyclical and regressive nature of Russian history. From her understanding of the “terror” as previously discussed, one can garner that she sees the path of Russia not as one that progresses, but one that is cyclical, condemning and stagnating. As Goscilo notes, *The Slynx* itself reproduces the stasis it attempts to depict, as akin to the image of Russia it presents, the “novel operates by repetition, not development.”⁴⁹ This is true insofar as the story does not seem to offer any real change or progress that amasses hope for the possibility of change. We see the overthrow of one despot lead to the reinstatement of another. We also see the emergence of atavistic characteristics such as tails, gills and cockscombs, as ‘Consequences’ of the Blast. There is also specific reference to a “lapti”, a slipper made from bast, which was worn by Russians in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁵⁰ As a result, there is a strong sense of regression and repetition that is characterised in the novel. Tolstaya uses the metaphor of a “meat grinder” to explore this fact. Left with only the instructions of the grinder as a reminder of its purpose, Nikita Ivanich, an Oldener, believes that although society has reverted to a stone-age level of subsistence, “the time of the meat grinder” will one day return as society rediscovers all its greatest inventions.⁵¹ On the other hand, Lev Lvovich, another Oldener, predicts only a repetition of past events. As he states: “the meat grinder hasn’t changed, only the attachments have”,⁵² he reflects on what he sees as the cyclic nature of Russian society. That is, no matter what changes are implemented, he believes that society will continually advance to the same stage, only to once again destroy itself. Inevitably, it seems to be the second calculation that Tolstaya most agrees with, as the novel ends with a blast reminiscent of the one that spawned this primitive society.⁵³ By ending the novel in such a way, through the repetition of an event instigated by a society plagued by repression, she meditates on what she sees as the crisis of Russia. Through the transmission of autocratic tradition, and the failure to question this trend, Russia has become locked into an endless loop of degradation and degeneration. Furthermore, given her illustration of the eternality of such cycles, this is something that Tolstaya imagines will lead only to further patterns of stagnation and collapse.⁵⁴

The dystopian quality of Tolstaya’s text provides her with a powerful tool to meditate upon the patterns of Russian history and culture. *The Slynx* illustrates not only the

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Tolstaya perhaps makes reference to ‘lapti’ as they themselves are a certain symbol of regression. She asserts in *Pushkin’s Children*, p.17, that after Novgorod (a once independent republic of Russia) had been conquered by Moscow under Ivan the Terrible, many sophisticated elements of its culture were replaced by the more primitive tools used around Moscow. Such is the case with the Lapti, a simple slipper-like shoe made from plant fibers, which replaced the more sturdy leather boots that were used previously.

⁵¹ Tolstaya, op. cit., p. 121,

⁵² Ibid., p.122.

⁵³ Ibid., p.294.

⁵⁴ Tolstaya herself has reflected on these very patterns in Russian history, by comparing them to the re-growth of fingerprints. She states: “when they invented fingerprinting, criminals tried to remove their prints by burning them or cutting them off. Yet they always grew back. If there is a pattern, it will come back - maybe in Russia more than anywhere else, because it has collapsed so many times.” See C. Bohlen, ‘A Tolstoy Speaks, and Russia Listens’, *New York Times*, January 11, 2003, p.7.

disorder of trying to rebuild society after communism, but exposes also how the turmoil of modern society is intrinsically linked to deep-rooted traditions of autocracy and dehumanisation that appear to be embedded within Russian history. By parodying conventional dystopian literature, Tolstaya is able to emphasise how these traditions are not simply imposed upon people from a top-down system of oppression. Rather, they are propagated from within the Russian consciousness, to form a cyclic pattern of regression and stagnation that governs the direction of Russian history. The failure of the Russian people to acknowledge these forces, she contends, only strengthens their hold over Russia's future. Meanwhile, Tolstaya does not attempt to propose any answers to these problems. This does not result in a devaluation of her analysis; in fact, it underscores the dangers of these obstacles all more powerfully. By illustrating the themes of regression, stagnation and authoritarianism in such a provocative way, she invokes a vivid picture of a dystopian world. This world, despite all its bizarreness, warns convincingly of how an apathetic attitude towards the institutionalisation of Russian cultural degeneration could severely stunt its ability to develop as a nation in the future.