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Master's thesis

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**POPULAR SUBJECTIVITY IN LATVIAN POLITICS:  
NATIONAL IDENTITY, EU MEMBERSHIP AND THE VOICE OF  
'THE PEOPLE'**

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This thesis conforms to the requirements for a Master's thesis

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## ABSTRACT

The thesis deals with the issue of popular political subjectivity in the context of attitudes towards the European Union. In its focus is Latvia where the public is more distanced and skeptic towards the EU membership than the political class. I argue that in order to explain this difference it is necessary to examine the discursive situating of the main subject of democratic politics – ‘the people’. Drawing on post-foundationalist analysis I show that in Latvia ‘the people’ are cemented as the founding power but not constructed as an active subject of established power. This in turn blocks the constitutive role of politics as any articulation of identity is assigned to only the politicians not the people. The unattainable wish that require for politicians to create an ‘ideal state’ results in constant disappointment with the actual political process. The barring of ‘the people’ from politics consequently impacts the perception of the European Union in regard to which ‘the people’ are constructed to have no agency while suspicion towards the actions of the politicians remains strong. Based on post-structuralist research design, the argument is established by two-fold analysis: the first part genealogically discusses the conceptual history of the categories of ‘the people’ and ‘the state’ in Latvia, and the second part provides an empirical analysis of the contemporary public debate on the Latvia’s presidency in the EU Council. Thus, the implications of the discursive constellation of Latvian popular subjectivity that is mapped out in the genealogical part are explored in regard to the Latvia’s EU membership. The thesis gives an original standpoint to continuous debate about the EU’s democratic deficit by highlighting post-foundationalist interpretation of popular politics as well as sheds new light on significance of the categories of the ‘nation-state’ in national political processes.

Keywords: political subjectivity, Latvia, European Union, post-foundationalism, post-structuralist discourse analysis, national identity.

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## INTRODUCTION

When the ten year anniversary of Latvia's EU membership was approaching on May 1<sup>st</sup> 2014 and local media outlets reminisced about the benefits that Latvia had acquired as EU member, they also had to grapple with puzzling statistics of the public opinion on the EU. If in the 2004 referendum 67 percent of the population voted for joining the EU, today this number would be just 38 percent (LSM, 28.04.2014). Just two months before Latvia joined the Eurozone in January, 2014, public support for the Euro maintained the low 20 percent (Neatkarīga Rīta avīze, 20.11.2013). The Latvian public continually has affirmed itself as distanced or even sceptical towards the European Union while the political class has been very EU-supportive. How it can be that the determinate pro-integration course which has been so characteristic to all Latvian post-communist political elite (e.g. Pabriks, Purs, 2001: 124) meets so little public support?

At the same time, it is also difficult to speak about a clearly formulated opposition to the European Union in Latvia. Eurosceptic positions are not popular among political parties, and policies of European integration, like adoption of the Euro or signing the Lisbon Treaty, have not met public protests or even sparked substantial political debate. It is indeed more precise to speak about a lack of opinion about the EU in the Latvian public. On the Eurobarometer survey question about whether the membership in the EU is a good or bad thing, dominant answer (fluctuating between 43% to 51%) for respondents in Latvia continually has been that it is 'neither' (Eurobarometer 2005; 2007; 2009; SKDS surveys<sup>1</sup>). So, while the political elite have actively pursued Latvia's integration into the EU, the public has remained unmoved or even skeptical.

The thesis approaches this puzzle from the perspective of the construction of popular political subjectivity in Latvia. I suggest that the relation between Latvia and Europe should be examined from the perspective of political subjectivity, that is, as the quest to situate the Latvian popular political subject, who, *inter alia*, creates and maintains relations with Europe. I place Latvia in a post-foundationalist reading of politics and ask the question: where are 'the people' when political decisions in regard to Europe are made? In this reading, politics is seen not as a

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<sup>1</sup>SKDS, an independent research centre in Latvia, has over years inquired the same question. In November 2014 number of 'undecided' was 43%. However, since March 2014 had increased number of those who think membership is a good thing (40%).

realm where different social groups play out their interests in procedural mode but where social identities became constituted in the first place. For democratic political system, the locus of these articulations is ‘the people’, a wielder of extra-constitutional power and the subject of democratic politics. It is in this perspective I argue that the political subjectivity of the Latvian people is blocked by negating the constitutive power of politics and assigning the political subjectivity solely to politicians. In Latvia the form of politics which is not instituted in an existing constitutional frame, that is, embodied in the parliament and other political institutions, is non-existent in the public discourses.

I interpret this as disavowal of politics in terms of Jacques Rancière. Using his terminology, I argue that discursively the Latvian nation-state is constructed in arche-political mode where the nation and the state are linked in a single, organic body with the state assuming all political authority for the nation. However, the organic link between the nation and the state proves to be beyond reach – moreover, as argued by Rancière, Ernesto Laclau and others, it is unachievable in principle. The longing for the impossible leads to the state being perceived as being too far away from the nation, switching the alternative mode – metapolitics – to take over which views all politics as corrupt and schemed. Both views form the dominant understanding of politics in Latvia and both of them block the entering of ‘the people’ into political domain. Thus politics becomes unresponsive and distanced towards the social identities of the people and can even lose its democratic character.

My analysis on historically rooted discourses on the Latvian nation-state as well as current discourses on Latvia’s presidency of the EU Council confirms this argument and shows how the particular constellation of political subjectivity impacts Latvia’s relation with Europe. Genealogical analysis brings forward categories that have been central in articulating the concepts of ‘the nation’ and ‘the state’ while the analysis of the EU presidency debate illustrates how the constellation of these elements relate to Latvia’s EU membership. It shows how the politicians construct the people as only indirectly involved in political decision-making and mostly as onlookers and receivers of political decisions. At the same time in the public discourses politics is constructed as schemed, false and unresponsive to the needs of the people. The thesis thus provides an original argument to explain the discrepancy between the public and the politicians in their attitude towards the EU as well as gives an in-depth analysis about the construction of Latvian popular subjectivity.

Consequently, the aim of this thesis is to find out how the construction of the Latvian popular subjectivity impacts the public attitudes towards the EU by examining how specific, historically established ideas of the nation and the state condition the construction of popular political subjectivity. The research questions thus are: how the relationship between ‘the people’ and ‘the state’ has been constructed historically as well as in the recent times, and which implications these constructions have had for the popular subjectivity of the Latvian people. I am providing an answer to these questions by looking retrospectively at the debates about Latvian national identity as well as by analyzing the recent debates around Latvia's EU presidency.

The research scope of the thesis thus encompasses analysis of secondary literature about conceptual history of the Latvian ‘nation-state’ as well as empirical analysis of the official statements and media reporting made during the time of Latvia’s EU presidency. The research material for empirical analysis consists of the government statements available about the EU presidency as well as commentary and opinion articles in the three biggest Latvian newspapers *Diena* (The Day), *Latvijas avīze* (The Newspaper of Latvia) and *Neatkarīgā Rīta avīze* (The Independent Newspaper of Latvia). This material was chosen to reflect the official positions of the political figures and other voices prominent in the public sphere. As a research method I use discourse analysis in order to determine that, in terms of Michel Foucault, ‘regularity in dispersion’ (Andersen, 2003:8) which constitutes the perspectives on reality, meaningful for actors involved.

The main focus of the thesis is precisely the hegemonic articulation of the national identity in the context of EU membership. I do not consider oppositional and marginal discourses. This is a limitation of this particular research design, which does not allow for a full mapping of the Latvian discursive field. However, given that the hegemonic discourse is shared by almost the entire political spectrum, as well as by the vast majority of opinion-makers, I consider my finding to be relevant, since they do reveal some crucial features of Latvian democracy, which might also exist in other countries and affect their democratic development.

The following text is divided into four chapters. The first chapter establishes the conceptual frame under which the Latvian case will be interpreted. It is based on the post-foundationalist reading of politics and construction of popular subjectivity drawing on arguments put forward by Rancière and Andreas Kalyvas. It is combined with more constructivist outlook on historically sedimented notions of popular subjectivity, developed by Ole Wæver, which puts

emphasis on the discourses of the nation-state. The second chapter presents the general research methodology in order to proceed with genealogical and empirical analysis. The third chapter provides an analysis of historical discursive categories of Latvian nation-state and argues about how the particular constellation of nation-state impacts the construction of popular subjectivity. The direct implications of this constellation in the context of Latvia's EU membership is examined in the fourth chapter, which establishes the subject in the official and the public discourses regarding the EU presidency as well as discusses the relationship between the people and politics. The overall argument about the discursive relation between the nation and the state blocking the popular subjectivity is summarized in the conclusion.

The case discussed in the thesis is illustrative both in a narrower and a wider context: firstly, in regard to Latvian context, it helps to shed light on why the Latvian public expresses little interest in the EU and feels distant from it; secondly, it points to the issue of the construction of the political subjectivity of the Latvian people that has consequences far broader than just Latvia's EU membership. In a wider perspective, the focus on who is the subject and the depolitization processes within member states adds another dimension to the EU 'democratic deficit' debate and underlines the importance of popular subjectivity and nationally loaded concepts in how relations with Europe are constructed.

## **1. CONSTRUCTING THE POLITICAL SUBJECTIVITY OF ‘THE PEOPLE’**

The chapter outlines the conceptual basis of the argument put forward in the thesis. It first looks upon the difference between the politics and the political which plays an important role in anti-foundationalist thought on subjectification. The construction of political subjectivity in democratic societies is then surveyed closer through work of Andreas Kalyvas and Jacques Rancière. The chapter concludes with a look on historical analysis of subject categories of collectivity that in regard to several European countries was carried out by Ole Wæver and other researchers. Altogether, these analytical perspectives underline the present research on the construction of Latvian subjectivity in the public domain.

### **1.1 The political subject in post-foundationalist reading**

The question of subjectification is situated in post-foundationalist perspective on politics. This perspective holds that there is no essence or truth on which social order and relations can be built on while at the same time maintaining that it points out the contingency and partiality of any grounds not rejecting them altogether (Marchart, 2007:2). It is this contingency and partiality which marks any grounding moment as being political.

Political theorist Carl Schmitt was first to propose a consistent differentiation between politics defined in a narrow sense as a competition between different parties, and political as principle of distinction according to which politics operate, namely that between friend and enemy. Since then many other theorists as Rancière, Slavoj Žižek and Ernesto Laclau have explored the difference between these categories and further expanded on significance of political in the political philosophy. This significance is understood as the constitutive effect of politics which is to be delineated from the political defined merely in terms of party competition. Rancière in Žižek’s interpretation distinguishes between police and political where the former refers to the order and the institutions while the latter to the interventions in police in order to presented previously unrepresented (Žižek, 1999:172). Through political action new social identities are constructed and existing ones rearticulated.

In the context of the thesis, the constitutive power of politics is framed in the question of generating the legitimacy in democratic societies: the process of popular subjectivization of demos, ‘through the emergence of a part identical to the whole’ (Rancière, 1998:61). Rancière

speaks about politics as a refraction of equality of all in the name of the freedom of a part, however, the part speaks as if it was the whole. That is, when those who have not identified themselves with demos or 'the people', 'a part of those who didn't have a part' (1998:61) began to claim their inclusion in demos, they do it by providing a new representation of 'the people'. Politics emerges when a particular group challenges the existing social order but not only this particularity demands its voice to be heard and included in society; by doing it speaks in terms of universality claiming to represent the whole of the society (Newman, 2012:89). Meaning of 'the people' thus remain target for constant struggle between different representations as pluralism is irreducible and there is always possibility to articulate new identity and demand that it becomes represented; in Laclau's terms 'the people' is an empty signifier that always exceeds one definite definition but instead serves as a focal point for tying up various representations of the reality (Laclau, 2005:69).

Because there is always a gap between the whole that is constitutive and represented in a given political system and different unrepresented identities of a 'part of no part', the process of subjectification can never be completed (Morozov, 2015:144). This, meanwhile, is the stuff of which politics is made; politics as such would cease to exist if the ideal, final version of political subjectivity – the final demos – would be achieved (2015:144). From this perspective, a political decision taken reflects more than the concrete situation and place; the decision-making does not come after the demos have already decided its social identity – it is precisely the decision itself that constructs or affirms of who the people and their will are; 'the locus of the decision be it the parliament or revolutionary crowd, is where and what the people is, at this very instance' (2015: 144-145).

Thus post-foundationalist perspective marks a significantly different approach to politics than others of more liberal, procedural inclination. Politics in this case is about the process of subjectification by recovering the ways how legitimacy in democratic societies is raised through representation of its varied demos. 'The people' which is the locus of generating legitimacy in democratic politics serves as the focal point for such expressions. Political subjectivity reveals itself in more or less mundane political struggles over various issues because every political decision taken in the name of 'the people' reveals who and where 'the people' are at the moment, and the political in this perspective is understood as precisely the struggle between various articulations of 'the people'.

## **1.2. The political and ‘the people’**

If in the post-foundationalist reading the politics is the moment where different subjectivities are crystallized and compete in order to achieve a hegemonic position, the question about the origins of democratic politics with its universal aim of equality and justice still remains. Andreas Kalyvas has made an important contribution in conceptualizing the start of democratic constitution and the people’s involvement in the political order it establishes.

Kalyvas speaks about the constitution of a political order and emphasizes that the collectivity which constitutes this political order should not be equalized with it (Kalyvas, 2007:298). Instead he distinguishes between three dimensions in the understanding of demos that constitute a democratic political system: the first dimension refers to the rare and singular instances of the foundings through collective action and activities by a people that are beyond any instituted order but which are an instituting society. The second dimension are a people or a instituted society that constitute the normal, constitutional political order. The third dimension is a people next to the instituted society and refer to extra-institutional cases of collective activities that capture the power of the constitutive society in the circumstances of a constituted society. These extra-parliamentary, extra-legal activities ‘keep alive the spirit of new beginnings’ (2007:298) and refer to roots of direct democratic legitimacy without objecting and claiming to replace existing constructions of the universal categories of demos. The first and third dimension captures what Kalyvas terms as extraordinary politics and the second is understood as ordinary politics. He indicates that the interaction between these three dimensions, especially between a people before the constitution and a people next to it, is a matter of intensity and gradualism not strict division. What Kalyvas explains with these categories and what is relevant in the context of the thesis are the different dimensions of the same body of a people (though Kalyvas uses the term ‘three bodies’) and the different implications of these dimensions for the existing political order that each of them signify. Three bodies of demos outline the positions of subjectivity of ‘the people’ that can be constructed in relation to the political system.

However, the situating of ‘the people’ is not the only thing that can characterize the construction of the political subjectivity. To return to Carl Schmitt, he made the difference between not just narrowly defined party politics and the principle of the political but also

distinguished the political from other fields of social. The significance of this distinction plays an important role in inquiring what kind of place politics has in a given society. Jacques Rancière speaks about the disavowal of politics by proposing three modes of politics – arche-politics, parapolitics and metapolitics – that actually denies the specific constitutive activity of politics by following different trains of thought of what politics mean. Rancière’s argument is that the Western societies have largely disregarded the understanding of politics as domain where popular subjectivity is constructed and denied politics by focusing on different interpretations of what it means. This thesis postulates that the disavowal of politics also occurs in the case of Latvia, however, in order to argue how Rancière’s conceptual frame applies to the way how the relation between the Latvian popular subjectivity and the political process is constructed, this frame first needs to be explained.

By arche-politics, which Rancière ascribes to Plato’s political philosophy, he means a situation where ‘any politics that is not embodiment of a principle of community is no politics at all’ (Rancière, 1998:63). The spirit of the community as an organic, homogeneous social body defines its idea of being and is a source for all community law which is set to realize this special mode of community life. In its centre ‘is placed true notion of community and the good attached to its nature which eliminates difference between politics and police’ (1998:63), that means blocking any conflicting elements in community’s political life. Community law presupposes an order where all members of society are given or learn their role according to their capabilities and any aspect that would go beyond this foundation of community body are suppressed from the political field (Bosteels, 2010:83-84). In this view of closely knit communitarian life no political moment can ever emerge as all the possible identities are already predetermined. The ideal demos already exists in the philosopher’s mind and other forms of activity that fall short of this ideal are excluded (2010:84-84). Thus, ‘instead of a polemical universality, the philosopher seeks to breathe life into particular ways of doing, speaking and living as moulded into the fragile bodies of each of the community's members’(2010:84) Although it may seem that Rancière speaks about the ancient times, these categories are direct critique of the modern politics; as even if the terms of the cosmic order have been exchanged with terms of the human-made order, the limitation of arche-politics for the emancipatory potential of politics still holds.

Parapolitics, attributed to Aristotle’s political philosophy, is said to be the most difficult to grasp for the modern reader because it reminds most of the ways of the modern politics

(Bosteels, 2010:87). Rancière here speaks about denial of politics through its identification with permanent agents that are competing over the power, recognizing demos as one of the actors. On the one hand, the ever-present conflict of politics is acknowledged and demos is positioned as separate agent, on the other hand it covers up the quest for politics in Rancière's terms as it focuses only on the distribution of power within a system – parapolitics consists in 'translating all politics into a question of power and command' (2010:87), that is, it denies the political articulation of new demands but instead defines politics only in terms of police in Rancière's understanding, that is, existing order and institutions (Žižek, 1999:190). The demos through which new horizon of subjectivity could be defined, in the parapolitical view is transformed to one of the parties among others thus limiting its emancipatory role (Rancière, 1998:72). The political struggle thus is understood to take place between already defined agents that in its proper sense excludes politics and excess, that unavoidably is part of political conflict, as not all demands can be satisfied within an existing system.

The third model of eliminating politics is metapolitics, critical impetus of which is attributed to Karl Marx in a sense how his economic determinism in translating all political process in terms of economics limits the constitutive dimension of political. In Rancière's interpretation metapolitics translates all political questions and activities as a cover up for some deeper hidden truth – 'metapolitics is the discourse on the falseness of politics that splits every political manifestation of dispute; the truth is hidden behind all political representations' (1998:82). Any political activity is understood to either be 'appearance' to hide the actual truth (in Marx's case it was the class struggle) or falling short of the realization of the actual truth in political domain through which society would finally reach its postulated end (Bosteels, 2010:90).

To summarize how the conceptual arguments explained above help to analyze the case of Latvia: the three bodies of 'a people' defined by Kalyvas provides a model using which it is possible to trace the way how Latvian popular subjectivity is defined in the domestic discursive field in regard to Europe – or, more precisely, how it is non-defined, since 'the people' appear neither in the depiction of the political process, nor in their ordinary form as 'the people' in the system, nor as the extraordinary 'people' beyond and next to the system. To make sense of a political process which excludes basic popular subjectivity Rancière's categories of disavowal of politics are very helpful. The most important focus of these categories is that they show different

forms of politics that establish the ways how the popular subject is blocked from entering into the scene by embedding it into the logic of already existing system: whether by tying it to all-encompassing community spirit, to one of the competing parties or by dismissing politics as altogether as dirty and false.

The case of Latvia in some ways can be compared to that of Russia, which, through the same categories offered by Kalyvas and Rancière, has been analyzed by Viacheslav Morozov. He has argued that Russian people are denied political subjectivity by Russian government through the disavowal of politics in the domestic sphere in a metapolitical way, defining politics as dirty and a corrupt business and by excluding any extra-constitutional forms of citizens' political activity from what is defined as demos (Morozov, 2015:147-150). His analysis reveals the particular definition and functions of politics that are articulated in contemporary Russian discourses and shows how subjectivity of the people is (de)constructed through maintaining police logic where all politics is defined through exercise of power by the figure of constituted sovereign authority – the president who is 'tasked with the preservation of the existing order by containing the extraordinary power of the people' (2015:159). In this view an important role is played by arche-politics, which describes political decisions in a communitarian mode: things are done because they are in accordance with the nation's metaphysical, spiritual values (2015:148).

Also in Latvia, the dominant is the arche-political tradition, however, if in Russia the symbol of constituted power is the supreme figure of the leader, in Latvia it is the figure of the people, embodied in the ethnically and culturally defined nation. However, the nation is not a political subject that retains extraordinary or even ordinary power as all the process of politics is delegated to the institutions: parties and politicians. The people are depicted as symbolic and metaphysical basis of the state but they remain silent in face of the political actors who supposedly represent them. Conversely, there is other strong tradition present – metapolitics that understands politics as corrupt and fraudulent when the politicians are portrayed to be neglectful and too far away from the people. So, if in Russia the metapolitical view is purported by the government in order to discredit the political sphere as a field of genuine social action (except its own position which works in a state of permanent exception) in eyes of the population, in Latvia it surfaces when the state is perceived to neglect its duty towards the nation from the side of the public. In other words, in this view the true purpose of politics has to revolve around the nation

and if there are deviations perceived, politics becomes perceived to be false and misguided. Besides the similarities between Russia and Latvia, there are important differences, and the source of these differences is embedded in social-historical context. The perspective explored in the next sub-chapter takes into account these contexts in order to determine their impact on the meanings ascribed to the demos in particular time and place.

### **1.3. Nation, state and people – categories of subjectiveness**

Post-foundationalist perspective does not place politics in a vacuum, instead any political activity is ‘always enfolded in sedimented layers of traditions which, conversely, are ungrounded, flexible and changeable for their part’ (Marchart, 2007:3-4). Thus while ‘the people’ is situated as a focal point in democratic politics, in modern historical context it usually unfolds in a nation-state and thus ‘the people’ becomes constituted as a nation.

Ole Wæver as well as other authors (Hansen, Wæver (ed.) (2002); Wæver, 2004; Holm, 1997; Larsen, 1999) have focused their attention on these basic categories of collectiveness through carrying out genealogical analysis of concepts as ‘the nation’ and ‘the state’ in order to establish the set of meanings that are associated with these concepts and that in turn frame other political discourses in the country, including that in regard to state’s relations with the European Union. Wæver’s claim is that discourses relating to an issue which is endowed with high political significance, such as the membership in the EU, have to be meaningful in the context of those basic categories of collectiveness; thus any political discourse in this case will relate itself with the elements of discourses on ‘the nation-state’. The emphasis in this approach of a certain discourses being more historically sedimented than others adds to post-structuralist view without implying that change is not possible; post-foundationalist arguments about contingency and instability of structure hold here as well (Wæver, 2000; 2002; 2004). Instead, this perspective repudiates the often voiced accusation that post-foundationalist maintains that everything is in state of constant flux through emphasis on stable social structures that nevertheless are viewed as contingent.

In a volume edited by Wæver and Hansen several authors from this perspective examine the cases of the Nordic states’ attitude to the EU. Their case analysis set a valuable framework of analysis in how subjectivity of ‘the people’ has evolved in a particular nation-state context during a long time span, thus revealing its place in deeply-embedded political discourse. More

importantly, it explores the consequences of these long-lasting discursive structures of ‘the people’ to the state’s approach and attitude towards the European Union. In the following part, I will review these national identity articulations in the Nordics in order to demonstrate the type of analysis which will be employed in the next chapter which discusses the construction of national identity in Latvia. Also, the cases of Nordic states create an important background for comparison in regard how the constitution of popular subjectivity has evolved in particular historical contexts.

In respective cases of the Nordics, Denmark and Norway constitute the most similar cases with ‘the People’ (*folket*) taking a central role in political discourse. Through ‘the People’ nation is constructed as ethnically and culturally knit group, understood in the German-type *Kulturnation* sense (Hansen, 2002:61; Neumann, 2002:124; see Kohn 1944). ‘The People’ is in the basis of ‘the state’ – the state gains legitimacy from its association with the nation as any politics based on ‘the People’ implies that the state is the nation’s state (2002:61). However, there is also tension between the two if the state is perceived to gain undue independence in regard to the nation; if the elites are showed to use state for power and ambition the politics starts to lose its legitimacy. Especially marked this is in the case of Norway where since local bureaucracy long represented foreign domination, only state institution that has link with ‘the People’ is the Parliament while there has been historical opposition between a continentally minded, centrally placed civil servants and a nationally patriotic, dispersed people (Neumann, 2002:124-125). What these historically established articulations mean in the context of the European integration is that if the EU membership is constructed as threat to state’s (the parliament’s) independence, it will also affect the independence of ‘the People’. In Norwegian case additionally the EU can be presented as another centralized, bureaucratic domination over the ‘the People’ (2002:124-125). In Danish case additional factor is the identity of the state as the welfare state thus perceiving the threat from the EU as moving into welfare policies (Hansen, 2002:61).

Sweden constitutes a different example as there the nation has more political and less ethnic meaning. Being a ‘Swede’ means to be democratic and freedom-loving thus linking nationalism with embrace of democratic values. Collective conceptions of ‘state’, ‘society’, ‘nation’ and ‘people’ are linked in a notion of the ‘people’s home’ (*folkhemmet*) – result of the agreement between a autonomous, free individual on the one side and the caring, welfare state on

the other (Trägårdh, 2002:131). Swedish case thus exemplifies extreme statism while maintaining the emphasis of freedom of an individual. In regard to the European Union it leads to constructing contrast between progressive, democratic, prosperous Sweden and backward, hierarchical, capitalist Europe that of course impact the Swedish public perception about the European Union.

However, the greatest outlier in the Nordic states in context of the EU is Finland which generally has showed more positive and proactive attitude towards the European integration. The difference lies in the way how it is possible to think of Finnish people as separated from the state in its cultural form and in its political form. The nation in this case has preceded the state and has history on its own as a type of *Kulturnation* that aims for cultural development and advancement of the people (in its historical setting striving to be more Western and advanced than Russia) and by doing so emphasizing not its distinct national uniqueness but the aim to be part of broader currents of development (Joenniemi, 2002:195). When Finnish statehood was defined it was conceived to be a power state – competing in interstate arena with the nation becoming much narrowly ethnically defined (2002:197). After WW2 this situation changed and the role of power state was downplayed while the one of cultural and emancipatory nation again re-emphasized (2002:202). Relation between the nation and the state thus has experienced various changes and retain their flexibility in face of newly occurring developments. However, in regard to Europe it has meant that the relative independence of the nation from the state ensures less concern about threat to state's political independence; the nation thus does not lose its shape if the political borders are becoming broader (2002:182; 209). Additionally, Finnish conception of the people as locus of development not specific ethnic codes had lead to perceive the EU as means of progress not cultural threat.

Thus the concepts that signify popular subjectivity in all of these cases are not simply empty categories but already contain historical representations of a certain ideas that are accordingly appropriated in political discourses. So, as the case studies showed, in Denmark and Norway and to a degree in Finland 'the people' have been constructed as organic, ethnically and culturally closely knit communities; in Finland, however, the emphasis has been on the peoples' striving for 'universal' not culturally particular values. Sweden the most dominant understanding has been that of the individualism of citizens while maintaining the state as all-compassing 'home' for everyone. The relationship between the people and the state has also developed in

different patterns: in Denmark, Norway and Sweden the understanding of the state has evolved simultaneously with expression of popular sovereignty thus ensuring that the meanings of ‘nation’ and ‘state’ in these cases largely overlap. In Finland, meanwhile, the state has come after the Finns as cultural group has already been established and this factor results in a certain flexibility between the ‘Finnish people’ as a cultural collective and political framework, be it the state or the EU, that contains them. The analysis provided through these cases direct to several useful points of reference in regard to the type of ‘nation-state’ structure that has been constructed in Latvian context. As will be shown in the third chapter, in Latvia, similarly as in Denmark and Norway, the people are conceived as a *Kulturnation*, which, as in Finland, has preceded the establishment of the state. The delay of the presence of the state in the articulation of Latvians as a collective has left a long-lasting tension in relation between the nation and the state.

This chapter introduced the two analytical frameworks which I combine in order to argue about the construction of the political subjectivity in Latvia and its impact on the Latvia’s European politics. The first framework theorizes emergence of popular subject through the constitutive power of politics, and the second framework analyzes how this constitutive activity unfolds in a particular social-historical context.

The post-foundationalist perspective, in which the first framework is grounded, views politics as a constitutive process in which different constructions of reality compete in order to achieve the hegemonic position of subjectivity. In democratic politics these attempts are centred upon the notion of ‘the people’ or demos. As the constitution of popular subjectivity is a process that never really ends, the really important question here is how the constitutive effects of politics are treated, or, in other words, where and how ‘the people’ are located in regard to a political process? Andreas Kalyvas speaks about ordinary and extraordinary politics of which the former refers to situation when ‘the people’ is an institutionalized power, and the latter to those moments when extra-institutional and novel power by ‘the people’ is defined. Meanwhile, Jacques Rancière argues about the three traditions – arche-politics, parapolitics and metapolitics – that block the emergence of ‘the people’ apart from the already established order.

The second framework, while holding the post-structuralist premise about contingency and temporality of any ground, provides a more constructivist account to the question of popular subjectivity by arguing about significance of conceptual history of those notions as ‘the nation’ and ‘the state’ in which the popular subject traditionally has evolved as well as theorizes how the structures of these historically embedded meanings interact with other issues in the political discourse such as the state’s membership in the EU.

Both of these frameworks help me to argue about the case of Latvia. My question, in the light of the distanced public attitude towards the EU, is precisely how ‘the people’ are situated in the domestic official and public discourses; I argue that ‘the people’ in Latvia have remained cemented in the phase of the constituting power, the people-beyond in terms of Kalyvas, and never fully become part of the ordinary politics. This is possible because the nation-state identity in Latvia is constructed in arche-political way, putting the primordial nation as the focus of the state while not involving it into the political institutions and order. The roles of the nation and the state are clearly delineated: the nation takes care of spiritual and cultural development, while the state takes care of politics. Whenever the state is perceived to diverge from its responsibilities forward come a meta-political response which dismisses politics as selfish and not done in the name of the nation. However, it is both arche-political and metapolitical views that keep the Latvian people out from politics. Lack of political subjectivity, thus, in its part can be argued to be the reason of the cold attitude towards the EU in Latvia.

The following chapters will ground this argument with empirical analysis of, first, the historical construction of the Latvian nation-state, and, second, the present day discourses on the Latvia’s membership in the European Union, but before to do so, it is necessary to establish the methodological framework of the thesis.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The chapter explains the research design that will guide the analysis of the popular subjectivity in historical and contemporary debate. The method used in approaching the empirical material in the thesis is post-structuralist discourse analysis, which holds a distinct epistemological as well ontological perspective on carrying out a research. These assumptions of the post-structuralist discourse analysis are first discussed in the chapter. It then focuses on explaining the post-structuralist discourse analysis in more detailed way and outline the most important dimensions in which the discourse analysis is employed in this thesis, including that of the type and number of sources and period of research.

### **2.1. Key premises of the post-structuralist research design**

In the perspective of post-structuralism, language is not a medium through which an objective reality can be expressed but it is constitutive of social reality: it assigns meanings to objects that makes them part of a socially shared context (Hansen, 2006:16). In this view, thus, language acquires ontological significance. The meaning of an object is constructed in a discourse – a relational set of signifiers that defines a particular identity and subjectivity, and is constantly renegotiated (cf. Torfing, 1999:85). This structure always remains unfinished, that is, no discourse can achieve full closure as being total because the meanings external to it, that at the same time help to define its borders, challenge its self-definition as being the ultimate truth. As a methodological perspective, post-structuralism does not juxtapose material and ideational factors; the core assumption of this view is that material things gain their ‘objective’ meaning once placed in a particular discourse (Hansen, 2006:19). Thus, for example, ‘gun’ can be interpreted as both protection if associated with the police or self-defense, and as a threat if associated with terrorists. Also, ‘gun’ cannot be exclusively defined as a carrier of protection because it can be as well linked with terrorism.

Meaning in a discourse is mainly constructed by employing two logics – linking and differentiation (2006:18; see also Jorgensen, Phillips, 2002: 26-27; Laclau, Mouffe, 1985). Linking refers to a positive construction of identity when different elements are connected in order to describe a certain identity while differentiation refers to negative identity, when something is defined in contrast to what is its opposite. In explaining the research design of post-

structuralist discourse analysis, Lene Hansen provides an example on how the two logics worked in constructing the identity of 'woman' in Europe in nineteenth century. First, the positive identity of 'woman' was established by linking the characteristics emotional, motherly, reliant and simple; second, to this process was added the construction of negative identity of 'woman' by opposing her to 'man' who was characterized as rational, intellectual, independent and complex. Thus, 'man' and 'woman' were defined in contrast to each other in a system of certain discursive elements. Moreover, this hegemonic discourse on each of them also defines the type of politics that are deemed meaningful in context of this discourse – namely, that women in 19<sup>th</sup> century were perceived to be too emotional and simple minded to comprehend and make complex political decisions, which in turn limited their political emancipation (2006: 16). This illustrates the political power of a discourse, and effects of its construction on social reality. Post-structuralist discourse analysis is embedded in the general framework of post-foundationalism, on which this thesis is based, where no discourse is conceived to define some ultimate truth on which social reality can be based; instead the establishment of meaning is always a political act in which a certain interpretation is preferred over others.

Studying discourse means to uncover this system of meanings that are linked and differentiated in order to define a particular subjectivity. Discourse is never obvious but is dispersed through wide array of sources; the task of the researcher is to capture the production and the reproduction of a particular identity across different modes of knowledge dissemination. Michel Foucault has described discourse as 'a system of dispersion [whenever] between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices', which form 'a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations)' (2006: 17). The main aim which the post-structuralist research design is set to achieve is the revealing of such 'regularity in dispersion' (Andersen, 2003:8) while holding unto a broader normative goal to question the power relations which these specific acts of discursive articulation establish as well as shedding the light on the ontological dimension of objectivity through arguing about the construction of the social reality.

## **2.2. Analyzing the discourses on the Latvian subjectivity**

Based on post-structuralist framework of discourse analysis, I analyze how the subjectivity of the ‘Latvian people’ is constructed and how it is situated towards the meanings of the ‘state’ and ‘Europe’ in the debate about Latvia’s EU presidency. My main emphasis in this case is on the concept of ‘the people’ as a focal point around which a certain set of signifiers is fixed. The tracing of these discursive structures is a two-fold process: on the one hand, I conduct a genealogical analysis of the concept of ‘the people’ in the Latvian case and explore the links established between ‘the people’ and ‘the state’ in order to provide a historical perspective on how the collective identity of Latvians has evolved over time and how it has been connected with modern form of political subjectivity – ‘the state’. On the other hand, by taking into account discursive formations of the national identity that I mapped out during a genealogical analysis, I establish the articulation of ‘the people’ and linking of it with ‘the state’ and ‘Europe’ in the debate about the Latvia’s EU presidency in order to see how the popular subjectivity is constructed in a contemporary debate on Latvia’s EU membership.

The genealogical analysis thus aims to recover the signifiers that were linked and differentiated to define the ‘Latvian people’ and the ‘state of Latvia’, and the relation envisioned between the two concepts, tracing back their conception to more than hundred years ago for ‘the people’ and slightly less for ‘the state’. Such scope of research surpassed the limits of the thesis, yet there already exists a literature that has dealt with the discourses on the ‘Latvian people’ and ‘the state’ in different time periods. Therefore, I base my genealogical analysis on secondary literature that has taken a similar epistemological and methodological perspectives as the one followed by this thesis. Also, by taking into account suggestion by Hansen (2006:75), various scholarly interpretations are compared in order to determine those explanations of Latvian identity that are repeatedly affirmed across variety of sources. My contribution in this context is a summarizing account on the conception and transformation of the Latvian national identity in a post-structuralist reading as previously interpretations about discursive structuring of Latvian collective identity existed in regard to specific time period, for example, Ulmanis authoritarian regime, and not as a general survey done from a post-structuralist perspective.

Thus, in the genealogical analysis I establish the main elements that have been linked in articulating the ‘Latvian people’ – unity, language, folk culture and rural life. ‘The state’ in this

early identity construction did not play major role; also once it was founded, it firstly was defined as democratic and European without the ethno-cultural definition of ‘the people’ taking a central place. However during the authoritarian regime, the state of the parliamentary democratic period was negatively defined against the rearticulated meaning of the state. The authoritarian state differentiated its identity from the parliamentary democratic one by characterizing the latter as foreign, artificial and fragmented while itself as ethnic, traditional and unified. The present nation-state identity combines elements from various past constructions of Latvian identity: it maintains the folk culture and unity as elements in discourse about ‘the people’; the state identity is constructed as democratic while maintaining the discourse on the state’s responsibility towards the ethno-culturally defined people as the central marker of its identity.

The main task of the empirical research of the thesis is to find out how the categories of the nation-state identity are articulated in regard to Latvia’s EU membership. The categories that are recovered in the process of genealogical tracing help to establish the main signifiers which construct the ‘nation-state’ identity in Latvia. Yet they do not by themselves explain how these signifiers can be used to articulate concrete policy projects, such as the Latvia’s relationship with its EU membership. Therefore, the main goal of the discourse analysis of the contemporary material was to trace meanings that are linked to articulate the ‘we’ that formulates the policy goals towards Europe. In uncovering this discursive construction my aim was to understand how in contemporary discourses are located the historically sedimented categories of ‘the people’ and ‘the state’, and how they are linked with the notion of ‘Europe’.

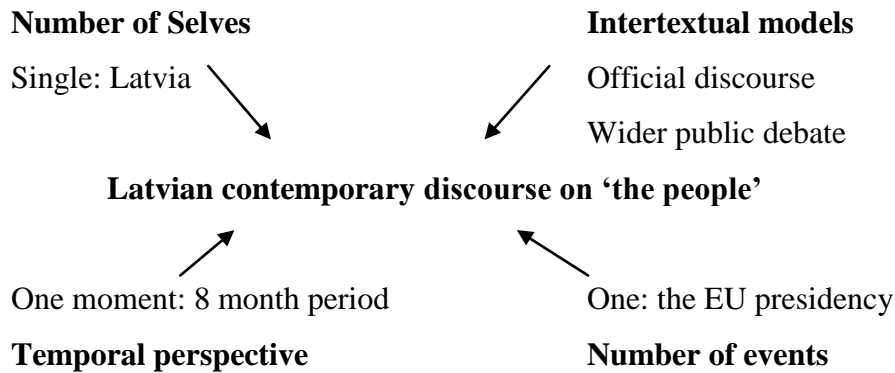
### **2.2.1. Research design**

As explained above, the research consists of genealogical and empirical part. Both are interlinked, however, the analysis of historical discourses serve as a background material in order to establish categories that are further studied in the contemporary discourse. The remaining part of this sub-section is thus dedicated to the analysis of contemporary empirical material. Here I draw on Lene Hansen’s model of research design of post-structuralist discourse analysis which describes the four most important dimensions that a researcher needs to consider before starting to study discourses. The first dimension refers to intertextual models of the research, that is, the analytical focus on selecting texts. There are four main models distinguished by their focus: 1) official discourse – here focus in statements by the heads of states, governments and senior civil

servants; 2) wider debate – in this case incorporated are texts produced by the opposition, media, and corporate institutions; 3) cultural representations – here focus is on more sedimented identity construction reflected in popular culture; 4) marginal political discourses – analyzing texts produced by social movements, academics and NGOs (2006:57). As Hansen suggests, the selection of texts depends on the aim of the research and these models can be combined or pursued separately – although the three of remaining models are likely to be structured around the official discourse. The second dimension is the choice of Selves which refers to number of subjects whose identity a researcher wants to trace; in the focus there can be, for example, several states or the same state across different time periods or events (2006:67). The third dimension is the temporal perspective of a research which refers to whether it is a particular event in time that is chosen analysis or the longer period to address continuity of the construction of some identity. In the study of a particular event, ‘the moment chosen will often have a striking character and be the subject of intense political concern’ (2006:69) while approach, where several moments over longer period of time are compared, will focus on the evolution of identity. The fourth dimension – number of events – is connected with the temporal perspective. The idea of event is quite broadly defined: it can be a certain policy, logically set in frame of a single moment or these can be several moments defined by issue, for example, ‘intervention’, set in the same moment or expanded over longer time period (2006:71).

I apply this general model to the study of Latvian collective subjectivity in discourses about the EU presidency. In regard to the general direction of text selection, I focus on the official discourse and wider public debate. I am interested in how the official statements articulate the concept of ‘the people’, and how the public actors respond to this construction. I focus on the most hegemonic articulation of the identity of ‘the people’ and, although, it is limiting in regard to marginal and oppositional discourses, it serves to reveal the most crucial features on discourse of ‘the people’. In regard to the second research dimension, I focus on single Self of ‘Latvia’, articulated during the moment of the Latvia’s presidency in the EU Council. I take a snapshot of single Self in context of concrete issue in limited time and space – Latvia’s identity in context its policy towards Europe – that I use to make a more general argument based on earlier research of Latvian identity. In a temporal dimension, I analyze the texts published in the period of the presidency as well as including a month before and after it, that is, in period from 01.12.2014 until 31.07.2015. In regard to number of events, the EU

presidency is chosen as event signifying Latvia's relations with Europe as a significant case when the most prominent discourses regarding Latvia in Europe were brought forward.



**Figure 1.** Research design for discourse analysis, adapted from Hansen, 2006:68

The model described above explains the focus and the scope of the research and helps to understand the main dimensions by which the selected data is analyzed. The next step in approaching the data is the method. By employing the discourse analysis, in this case the method is to find the patterns in articulating the ‘we’ – pronouns that express collectivity – that appears in these official statements and public commentary. Once I had established what were the reoccurring signifiers that expressed the meaning of ‘we’, ‘our’ and ‘us’ in this context - dominantly, ‘politicians’ and ‘officials’ in Latvian case – I was able to follow how they are connected with other categories of interest in context of this research, namely, ‘the people’ or ‘the state’. Thus, for example, I discovered that ‘we’ in official discourse is exclusively granted to the politicians while ‘the people’ were ascribed a role of observers; and ‘Europe’ subsequently was only linked with this ‘we’, effectively excluding ‘the people’ as a political subject who has direct saying over European affairs. To generalize, in texts I focus on certain categories of words and trace the meanings that are connected to describe these words; and later I inspect the way how these different categories are linked or differentiated from each other.

### 2.2.2. Selecting sources

In order to carry out the analysis, it was necessary to collect empirical material. As I in the intertextual dimension I focus on the official discourse and the wider public debate, the main

sources that were chosen were the official statements by politicians that appeared in the government websites as well as opinion and commentary sections in the media.

In regard to politicians, I initially checked for the official statements and speeches available online made by the highest ranking political figures: the president, the prime minister, speaker of the parliament and (in the context of the EU) minister of foreign affairs, as my interest is the most dominant mode of the official discourse. However, there were few direct official statements available from the official figures; the exception was the official statements by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, accessible through the ministry's website. Thus, the statements by politicians were mainly examined through reporting of mass media – and also in this case the number of direct statements was limited. From 583 newspaper publications that were selected for the research (explained more below), only 8 directly focused on the topic of the EU presidency and incorporated direct statements from the politicians. It is a revealing factor in itself as it illustrates the limited communication between the politicians and the public in regard to an important policy issues.

In regard to the public discourse, I selected the newspaper publications by employing the site [www.news.lv](http://www.news.lv) which provides a date base base that covers 70 national and regional newspapers articles from the last 20 years as well as from the news agency Baltic News Service (BNS) and is updated every day. It provides a search engine through which the user can find publications by indicating keywords, time period, newspaper and other parameters. I used one keyword 'presidency' (*prezidentūra*) as my chosen time period was limited and focused on the time of the presidency so largely only relevant articles would show up in this period. I selected three main national newspapers *Diena*, *Latvijas avīze* and *Neatkarīga Rīta avīze*. Altogether 583 publications were selected from which in regard to the public debate I chose 34 articles that were opinion and commentary pieces (the largest number of which – 17 – were published in *Latvijas avīze*, 9 in *Neatkarīgā Rīta avīze* and 8 in *Diena*). Additionally, I surveyed internet news platforms by searching official statements and opinion pieces in the popular internet news sites [www.delfi.lv](http://www.delfi.lv), [www.tvnet.lv](http://www.tvnet.lv) and [www.lsm.lv](http://www.lsm.lv) (Public Broadcasting of Latvia internet site) that all had a separate category dedicated to the news about Latvia's EU presidency. In the research period there were 130 news about the presidency in [www.delfi.lv](http://www.delfi.lv), 98 news in [www.tvnet.lv](http://www.tvnet.lv) and 158 online articles in [www.lsm.lv](http://www.lsm.lv). Although I mainly focused on studying discourses in the

newspapers, I used the online media as a background material in order to see whether it was possible to trace and quote the dominant discourses also there.

### **2.2.3. Limitations**

The limitations of this research design can be divided in two directions: the first direction refers to overall methodological standpoint of post-structuralist discourse analysis, and the second direction to the scope and focus of this concrete research. In regard to the first direction, it is necessary to remind that this is not a sociological study of politicians or public opinion. It implies that it focuses not on individual motives or aggregated beliefs but on intersubjectively constructed meanings of social reality. This also is important in context of post-structuralist terminology that is used in the thesis. So, for example, a concept of ‘representation’ (as politicians representing the people) needs to be understood not as part of (procedural) political theory of democracy, but in context of capturing how in a particular discursive field are articulated categories of ‘the people’ or ‘politicians’. As put by Jacob Torfing, ‘we don’t have any access to the real world except through its construction as a discursive form within more or less ideological systems of representations’ (Torfing, 1999:113).

The second direction relates to aim to examine the hegemonic interpretation of Latvian subjectivity, thus focusing on the official discourse and wider public debate that reflect the most open space for constructing discourse to which the most people have access to. I analyze the statements by the highest standing political leaders and the opinions in the biggest newspapers in order to recover the idea about the popular subject that is the most visible and dominant in the Latvian discursive sphere. As a limitation thus can be considered the exclusion of the more marginal or side discourses like those reproduced by the opposition, academics, in the social media or in the parliamentary debates, etc. All these positions are very important in uncovering the full construction of a particular identity, however, it can be argued that the most dominant discourses will be difficult to avoid in the mass media, and it is my interest to reveal identity constructions that are reproduced in the most public space.

### 3. CONSTRUCTING THE LATVIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY: PAST AND PRESENT

This chapter discusses the historical development of the notion of the Latvian people and the state over the period from the 1850s when the idea of the Latvian people (*tauta* in Latvian) was first widely formulated. The nation thus preceded the state that was founded in 1918 and the subsequent story of both is an about turbulent, irresistibly bound but at times separate histories of each. Succinctly the dynamic of this relationship has been put in the phrase: ‘one can imagine the Latvian nation without the state, but one cannot imagine the state without the Latvian nation’.

Thematically the chapter is divided in two parts: the first one covers period from 1850s until 1940 to focus on how the articulations of the ‘Latvian nation’ and the ‘state of Latvia’ were constructed in the first place, and how relationship between these two notions was transformed during the authoritarian regime that lasted from 1934 to 1940. The second part is dedicated to explaining the constellation of ‘nation/state’ that has been put forward since regaining the independence of Latvia in 1990s. The crucial factor here is that in the Latvian political imaginary there is no break between the past and the present, and the overview of those past discourses is very important to understand codes that were employed and appropriated in political and public discourses in early 1990s and still are today. The period when Latvia was part of the Soviet Union, meanwhile, is perceived to have no links of continuity with the Latvian nation and the state, therefore it is not directly included in this analysis.

Before continuing, I wish to summarize the main points of the chapter in more conceptual level. The ‘Latvian people’ was conceived as a cultural community without notions of aspiring to statehood or any other form of political expression. In turn, the ‘state of Latvia’ was founded upon political-civic categories and excluded ethno-cultural markers. The authoritarian regime, established in 1934 by then Prime Minister Kārlis Ulmanis, connected the notions of the nation and the state, and fused the state around idea of the Latvian nation. Ulmanis regime formulated the arche-political idea of politics as focused on the advancement of the community, described as a natural being and (as usual in the arche-political view) maintaining that ‘each of whose parts should work in unison if the whole is to flourish’ (Sharpe, Boucher, 2010:167). The mission of the state in this conception was to articulate and take care of the nation’s political will.

After restoration of the independence, Latvian political elite united around the nation/state relationship from the Ulmanis period, except the state that before was identified with

one leader now was symbolized by the parliament. At the same time, already in the first parliamentary period from 1918 to 19134 in the situation when the Latvian state was not centered on the Latvian nation, in their frustration Latvian nationalist intellectuals articulated metapolitical response to political process by denying the truthfulness of politics because it neglected the nation. The unity and moral position of the nation in this view is opposed to the fragmentation and selfishness of the political parties. After the restoration of the independence this metapolitical tradition was revived, and the prevailing discourse about political parties still is that they represent interests of a particular group not those of the nation and the state.

Arche-political and metapolitical view thus co-exist in the present day discourses on the Latvian nation and the state. The state is constructed to be the nation's state; the most important politics should be based on what 'Latvian people' want and need, otherwise the state loses its legitimacy. Meanwhile, politics itself can be constructed as untruthful and unfit for the purpose assigned to the state.

The secondary literature on which the proceeding analysis is based comes from various sources but mostly it is historical, sociological and cultural analysis that has overviewed the meanings and ideas associated with the nation and the state in Latvia's case.

### **3.1. Constructing 'the people'**

The Latvian nation was conceptualized much earlier than state of Latvia. Indeed, the crucial factor in regard to this conceptualization was its neglectfulness to any political program. In the centre of efforts by the 'Young Latvians', group of nationalist writers and activists that were active during 1850s – 1880s, was the formulation of Latvian *Kulturnation*: promulgation of idea about Latvians as bounded, organic collective that shared ancient language and culture. The 'Young Latvians' were the first to use the concept 'Latvian nation' as before sense of any collectivity for Latvian-speakers were prescribed as being peasants or non-Germans at most; this was done both by themselves and the Baltic Germans, who constituted the stratum of administrative and economic elite in the Baltic Provinces of the Russian Empire (Plakans, 1995).

The most of work, then, this period was dedicated to formulating main markers of the 'Latvian nation'. The influence by the philosophy of German national romanticism of Johann Gottfried Herder and Johann Gottlieb Fichte was clear: the 'Young Latvians' conceived nation as an organic community bestowed by unique spirit, expressed in culture, especially folklore that had

preserved the most ancient customs and philosophy (Lieven, 1993:113). Atis Kronvalds, who did the most work in formulating ideology in this initial phase of Latvian nationalism, spoke about collective reason (*kopības prāts*) (Buceniece, 1995:15). So, culture was the expression of the nation's philosophy – product of its reason. In the light of these perspectives, the Latvian nation was defined by elements of language, culture as well as descent. One could be only born into its 'people' that was at the same nation, even if it did not realize it yet (as what had happened with Latvians before mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, argued the 'Young Latvians') (Plakans, 2011:225). Alongside language as a carrier of the unique national culture, crucial elements of the 'Latvianness' were also rural life and the figure of a peasant. Interestingly, the time when this vision of Latvian nation was formulated, was also the time when Latvians become more differentiated by their social, occupational status than ever before (Plakans, 1974); for example, the emphasis on countryside in national identity formulation did not fit well to include large urban group of Latvians (Plakans, 2011: 247-248). Nevertheless, the idea of the Latvian nation as defined in this period remained firmly framed in the terms of language, folklore, history and peasant lifestyle; and most efforts of the 'Young Latvians' were dedicated in emphasizing difference of Latvian identity to that of the co-existing Baltic German and Russian ones and argue about need to secure equality of this identity to others in economic, cultural and social spheres of life (Zake, 2007a:310; Zake, 2008:46; Ijabs, 2013a:96). Yet thinking of the state, of political goals for the Latvian nation, was not part of this early Latvian nationalism.

### **3.2. Constructing 'the state'**

The Republic of Latvia was proclaimed in 1918 by the self-assigned National Council that consisted of political groups that opted for the sovereign state and seek recognition from the Western European countries. Other major alternatives of political organization for Latvians at the time were project by Latvian Bolsheviks of the Soviet Republic connected with the Soviet Russia, and certain form of state based in cooperation between the Baltic Germans and Latvians, supported in more conservative circles of Latvians (Blūzma, 2013:231). The legitimacy of the National Council project was acknowledged by 1920 elections of the Constitutional Assembly and ensuing adoption of the Constitution in 1922. However, it is necessary to underline the variety and differing character of organized activities with smaller or larger political ambitions in

the territory of Latvia and also beyond (due to the efforts by Latvian refugees) before the state of Latvia was founded.

This background meant that there were different conceptions regarding the nation and the state operating at the time. Indeed, they were many who could claim to speak in the name of Latvians without fear of contradiction (Plakans, 1995). The first Latvian political party Social Democrats, that was founded in 1904, split between those who as their main aim held struggle for the workers' rights and disregarded idea of the nation altogether as 'mist' in the workers eyes not allowing them to see their strictly class interests (Dribins, 1997:46). Another larger group among Latvian socialists included those who acknowledged quest for political self-determination in national terms and who eventually allied with centrist parties that represented agrarian and urban elite groups of society. There were also those who mistrusted ability of Latvians to establish any successful self-government and argued for need to create type of political-administrative arrangement where power would be shared with the Baltic Germans.

Yet also the political groups and actors – social democrat, agrarian, urban elite, non-Latvian ethnic, regional representative parties – who had grouped around vision of national self-government, first, by expecting autonomy within the Russia, later transferring the claim for independent state, experienced many differences in opinion among themselves. The main principle of state, then, had to express a common denominator. Such nominator was democracy. Independence, democracy, its similarity to other European states were the most significant markers of the newly founded state, with presenting the state of Latvia as opposed to both the Russian Empire's autocracy and the Baltic Germans' corporativism (Ījabs, 2013b:138). This conception of state did not speak about Latvian nation as formulated during the work by the 'Young Latvians', instead the Constitution mentioned 'nation of Latvia', a civic definition of nation in a sense that it considered as main criteria for belonging citizenship not ethnicity (Šilde, 1992:349) and that it put forward idea that everyone who accepted main values of state - its independence and democracy, were to be included in its community (Bleiere *et al*, 2006:45).

### **3.3. National identity during the authoritarian regime**

Meaning of the state and the nation, and relation between them was transformed after coup in 1934 led by then Prime Minister Kārlis Ulmanis who established an authoritarian regime in Latvia. Although the Constitution itself was not amended, the meaning of the 'nation of

Latvia' came to be associated with the 'Latvian nation' in a sense that the 'Young Latvians' had envisioned it (Butulis, 2012:93). That is, definition of the nation during the Ulmanis regime invoked elements of common descent and traditions, history and ideals while agriculture and life of a peasant expressed core values of nation (Hanovs, Tēraudkalns, 2014:70). Most significantly, the emphasis was unity and unanimity of nation as a single body, reminiscing of the 'Young Latvians' notion of 'collective reason'. Latvians were addressed as collective with a single will that for the first time had found its political expression through the regime of 1934; this was one the central tenets of the Ulmanis ideology.

Of course, it also meant change in the definition of state and in formulation of values associated with it. The view that was purported during Ulmanis years was that democracy or 'time of the parties' was time of ubiquity of interests that were alien for the Latvian nation and that it meant disunity and fragmentation for it (Hanovs, Tēraudkalns, 2011:39; Metuzāle-Kaugere, 2004:144-145). The elements that had been characteristic of the period of the parliamentarism - liberalism, democracy and socialism - were presented as alien, borrowed, artificial for the Latvian nation (Butulis, 2012:91). During Ulmanis years the view highlighted was that state belonged to nation and the principal purpose of the state was to protect the Latvian nation and ensure its wellbeing (Plakans, 2010:22).

The view about downfalls of democracy and its incompatibility with needs of the Latvian nation did not appear unexpectedly in the Ulmanis regime. Before, during the parliamentarian period, nationalist intellectuals (in Latvian context I understand nationalist in a sense that they concerned themselves with issues regarding ethnic-cultural nation not, for example, socialism) had increasingly expressed their disappointment about democracy and politicians. Together with 'soldier', 'intelligentsia' was in their own writings portrayed as 'fathers of statehood' with the former being responsible for strength and the latter for imagination that brought idea of state of Latvia to reality (Lipša, 2013:339). Politicians, in contrast, were considered been too pragmatic and if it was to left to them, Latvia would never become a state. For those intellectuals the key notion was the unity of the nation, and democracy was not able to provide ideas on which this unity could be built; quite the opposite – it promoted individualism and particularism, and did not require identification with the nation (2013:332; Zake, 2007b:299). With authoritarian regime the view that equated the nation and the state became the official ideology. During this

period, then, the Latvian nation and state were fused into one entity, with elements of common descent, culture and custom of life taking central place in the definition of the nation/state.

### **3.4. National identity after 1991**

This section will outline the basic understandings of the nation and the state that were established after restoration of Latvia's statehood in 1991 and have been dominant since then. 'Restoration' itself is a term that indicates understanding about the continuity of the interwar state with the current state that has been central for the post-communist Latvian politics. 'Interwar Latvia' was a symbol of independence that during the Soviet regime served as a central element of the opposition discourse (Kruks, 2002:5). Consequently, it became the focal point around which the post-communist Latvian political vision was built; temporally and spatially future of the 1990s Latvia started where the pre-war state had been left (Stukuls Eglitis, 2002:100).

The understandings of the nation and the state that were employed in the political discourse were also taken over from the interwar state, more precisely the Ulmanis period. Yet, it does not entail that Latvian politicians returned to authoritarianism. Generally, picture was more complex than that. On the one hand, the 1922 Constitution was re-installed and the general elections called for the 5<sup>th</sup> *Saeima* (parliament in Latvian), so symbolically continuing from where the 4<sup>th</sup> *Saeima*, that was suspended by the coup of Ulmanis, had left. On the other hand, all the political parties right of center, that did address ethnic Latvians, formulated their identity on basis of the nation/state idea that was central to the Ulmanis regime, while the leftist parties, that become identified with the non-ethnic Latvian voters, invoked the civic conception of the nation, defined in the reinstated Constitution.

In the immediate period of the independence, Ulmanis himself served as a major symbol for constructing political identity (it is no coincidence that the first president of freshly independent state was Guntis Ulmanis, a relative of deceased politician). One of the factors that signify the importance of the Ulmanis nation/state conception, was limited role of the party tradition from the first parliamentary period of 1918-1934. Only two political parties associated themselves with their pre-war counterparts. One of them was The Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party that was not elected in the first general elections and has subsequently led quiet

political life. The other was the Latvian Farmers' Union that prominently highlighted link with its past leader Kārlis Ulmanis.

Daina Stukuls Eglitis has analyzed the symbolic content of political party programs for the first *Saeima* elections after regaining the independence that took place in 1993. She describes dominant theme as 'blood and soil' with the nation, land, and nature as the reoccurring symbols (Stukuls Eglitis, 2002:100). These visions were based on understanding of the nation as *tauta*, conception from the time of the 'Young Latvians', that invoked language, folk culture and traditions, and rural life as elements of communality (cf. Bunkše, 1999:128). The state, in line with the Ulmanis paradigm, was understood as expression of the nation's will; as something that belongs to the nation. Stukuls Eglitis points that all parties presented their program as a matter of national interest (2002:100). Parties perceived their role as speaking in the name of the nation, not as representing some political group. Their own political identities were not much pronounced. As Sergejs Kruks pointedly writes about the rhetoric style of the political parties in those first elections: ' 'Me' is just a humble communicator of the grand narrative whose real author are the Righteous State and the Nation, the enunciator has no right for his personal image' (Kruk, 2002:6).

The Latvian political elite of the early independence period, then, established notions of *tauta* and the state as executor of *tauta's* will as the main elements of the underlying structure of political discourse. Understanding of the nation and the state has not been much transformed since then. In this constellation nation is an ethnic and cultural collective which does not have political subject position. Sergejs Kruks, who has analyzed party programmes and politicians' speeches from a perspective of the conceptualizing 'nation/state' in contemporary Latvia, shows how the nation is regularly reproduced as a passive actor while the state has responsibility to 'take care' of it; the politization of the nation is not part of this imagery - 'the leaders of the Republic of Latvia construct the state as a self-sufficient value. They perceive the social differentiation, diversity of opinions and individual interests as a threat to the natural cohesion of *tauta*' (Kruks, 2007:23). The state thus is responsible for the politics while the nation remains apolitical in order to escape from fragmentation which goes against one the most central identity marker of Latvian people – the unity.

If straightaway after regaining the independence *all* political parties talked as if they would speak in the name of the nation, soon they had to somehow differentiate themselves. This

was done through attempts to fill universal concepts like ‘development’ from a position of who would be the most ‘truthful’, ‘right’ to the interests of the nation and accusations to opposition who would betray them (Kruks, 2002). In such way unity of the nation was maintained.

An interesting case study in the context of the arguments elaborated in this section is the adoption of Preamble to the Constitution that took place in 2014. Firstly, the Constitution, which was adopted in 1922, until then had no mention of the Latvian nation, an ethno-culturally defined collective. Instead the only nation it spoke of was the ‘nation of Latvia’<sup>2</sup>, a term that has connotation as being the collective of Latvian citizens. How stated author of the Preamble, judge of the European Court of Justice Egils Levits, the Preamble’s main goal was to precisely define relationship between the Latvian nation and state of Latvia: ‘The assemblage of Latvian citizens without the determinate nationally cultural role of the Latvian nation within it, or, in other words, Latvia without Latvians would mean virtual destruction of the state founded in 1918’ (Levits, 2013:22)<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, the Latvian nation, *tauta*, was brought into official political discourse, where it had not been in the pre-war parliamentary period. In turn, the Preamble affirmed link between state and *tauta* in the contemporary Latvia. Secondly, the Preamble also affirmed the focal point the Latvian nation takes in defining idea of the state. At the time, then Speaker of the Parliament and head of the Unity party Solvita Āboltiņa stated:

I truly believe that the founders of our state were certain that the Latvian language must be the core element of our state which should be protected, that the state has to ensure the development and nurturing of the Latvian culture, and that the existence of the Latvian nation throughout the centuries, as set forth in the draft preamble, was the goal of founding the state of Latvia in the first place.

(Āboltiņa, 28.10.2013)

So, in more than two decades since regaining the independence the main principles of the ‘nation/state’ constellation in Latvia has remained fixed – the Latvian nation as ethno-cultural body and the state as its political embodiment is the dominant idea. It does not mean that this basic understanding is not challenged; it is quite the opposite in regard to ‘nation’ in Latvia,

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<sup>2</sup> In the official translation of the Constitution the term ‘*Latvijas tauta*’ is translated as ‘people of Latvia’. I continue to use the translation by historian Andrejs Plakans (1995) ‘nation of Latvia’, used in several other texts, e.g. Stukuls Eglits.

<sup>3</sup> All translations by author. Original reads: ‘*Latvijas pilsoņu loks bez latviešu nācijas noteicošās nacionāli kulturālās lomas tajā, jeb citiem vārdiem Latvija bez latviešiem nozīmētu Latvijas kā 1918. gadā dibinātas valsts faktisku bojāeju.*’

especially because there is other well-rooted conceptualization of the nation as body of citizens. Alternative constructions of the nation/state, and their relationship is therefore part of Latvian political imagery, especially among political groups that represent non-ethnic Latvians in Latvia (cf. Petrenko, 2011:51). Yet, the paradox lies in the act even while the definition of the nation (as indicated by the debate around the Preamble project on whether the Constitution really needs to mention ethno-cultural definition) is a matter of political struggle, the idea of the state as belonging to the Latvian nation, as given to fulfill its needs is almost never contested.

To return to main argument of this section, the way how the nation/state constellation has been established anticipates that state formulates political interests of the nation which itself is conceived as a naturally given community with a single will. In the arche-political body of the nation/state, the task to express this will politically is up to the state not ‘the people’ themselves. While this task of the state to articulate political subjectivity for ‘the people’ is almost never questioned, the specific role of the politicians and parties here is paradoxically contested.

### **3.5. Us and them: ‘the people’ against the politicians**

Along the discursive construction where the state identity is based on the ethno-cultural people while the only subject of politics is the state there is another long-standing element: opposition of the political parties to ‘the people’. In the interwar years in the works of nationalist intellectuals and during the Ulmanis regime in official state ideology representation of ‘political party’ was opposed to that of the ‘nation’; parties were set to symbolize selfish group interests that are not directed nor towards welfare of the nation, nor the state. This representation of political parties is still dominant today and reflects the metapolitical tradition in Latvian politics. It revolves around the view that political parties and politicians are selfish and corrupt and are interested to fulfill only their own interests not those of the people they are supposed to represent (Dreifelds, 1996:14; Eglitis, Ardava, 2011:125). In this section I wish to explore how and why this tradition has been maintained for such a long time.

First, the specific idea of the nation and the state from the Ulmanis period was central for the general discourse of regaining independence; it was the ideal to which the state and the society had to return. The Ulmanis period symbolized independence and cultivation of the Latvian nation and culture – precisely those values that the Soviet occupation had hit the hardest. In contemporary Latvia the loss of democracy in 1934 has been perceived as much less

important than the threat to Latvian language and culture, and the existence of the nation, during the Soviet period (Ījabs, 2013b:142). Ulmanis still is a symbol of a perfect statesman who, although controversial, could get 'things in order' (Zelče, 2007:11-12). Thus, the type of politics, whose focal points were 'nation', 'culture' and 'unity', that was purported during the Ulmanis regime, as contrasted with the party politics of the first parliamentary period, whose focal points were 'democracy', 'socialism', 'citizen', has become much more established in the contemporary Latvia. This is the arche-political model of politics in which all social processes and identities derive their origin from the conception of the nation, and where political parties, because they have been opposed to unity and fullness of the nation, are constantly under suspicion.

Second, since regaining the independence, the Latvian political elite have continued the arche-political tradition of Ulmanis regime by constructing the nation as a collective that has a passive role in politics while political subjectivity is delegated to the state. But whereas in its heyday the state was also represented by one symbol politically – the 'Leader', now the 'the nation' is supposedly split into many parties. The response by the parties, how has showed the research by Sergejs Kruks (2002), has been to reproduce idea of the nation in a way that depicts it as a community separated from the state and politics, thus maintaining its unity, expressed in cultural and spiritual terms. This, in turn, means that the political parties do not constitute their political identities by claiming that they are 'the people', thus, in Kalyvas terms embodying the extraordinary body of 'the people' into ordinary politics, but operate as agents who permanently are in struggle between the 'good' and 'evil' for the static community. Such conception of political repeatedly underlines the arche-political view of Latvian domestic sphere through formulating it as a struggle between the truthful and the false political framework for the community. So, the main identity marker for the political parties remain not the particular articulation of 'the people' but what is good/bad for them thus embodying politics as a fight between the 'good' and the 'evil' in the name of the community. Indeed, the idea that one's political position should reflect the most 'true' and 'authentic' worldview has remained characteristic to the Latvian society since the fight for independence the end of 1980s (Ījabs, 2005:135).

Third, there is tradition among the Latvian intellectuals to critically assess politicians and political parties as unworthy to understand needs and interests of the nation, giving a priority to

the educated elite in formulating the nation's will (Zake, 2011:30). This metapolitical response, resulting from the marginalized impact in the state's political life while their influence in constructing the nation's identity has been so large, was characteristic to the pre-war cultural elite. By rearticulating the arche-political view on the nation-state after the regaining of the independence, the metapolitical tradition is also renewed. In this view, these are not the politicians and the parties that are qualified to argue about what the nation needs, it can only be task of writers and other cultural figures who, by their special place in maintaining the nation's culture, are better suited to articulate its political framework. The politics itself, however, in this view is denied by depicting it as 'dirty game' by those uninterested in the nation's life. Disdainful view of politics contributes to foreignness of idea of grouping around some particular interests in the thought about collective action and political decision making in Latvia. The main value here is unity. It, in turn, affects the perception of political parties and their programs – such as the project of European integration.

The analysis of the discourses on the Latvian nation-state showed the evolution of the ideas of the nation/state from their conception through subsequent development. It established that the nation – the people – as ethnic and cultural group is distinguished from the state. This means that is it possible to think about the nation without reference to the state; the people is understood as a cultural collective whose aims are largely based on cultivating their culture. However, a significant part of that consists in owning the land and fighting external enemies, which are aims that require a political instrument, the state. Yet the nation itself is not a political agent, all political responsibility has been delegated to the political institutions – the parliament and the government – while the people retain their power by residing beside ordinary politics as the symbolic source of legitimacy. In terms of Kalyvas the people is the constituting power of the political system but not part of the institutionalized politics, apart from casting a vote in the elections, while subjectivity only belongs to the political parties. Political parties, in their part, do not constitute their identities on articulations of 'the people', but on a claim to be the most truthfully committed to the interests of 'the people' why blocking the possibility to define those interests by the people themselves.

Alongside this arche-political construction, in the dominant discourse of Latvian nationalism, political parties have been opposed to the nation through contrasting the fragmentation and self-interest of the parties against the moral unity and will of the nation. It is based in metapolitical tradition in portraying politics as not living up to its 'real' mission – in this case that of taking care of the ethno-cultural nation. The exclusion of politics by some better suited solution, that only some were qualified to articulate, experienced its high-point during the Ulmanis authoritarian regime, but remains to be present in contemporary Latvia. Most importantly, it is maintained by parties themselves by each of them claiming to be the only genuine representative of the nation's behalf and dismissing others as false.

Overall, with the discursive unfolding of the 'nation-state' discourses in Latvia 'the people' are barred from politics, firstly, by assigning politics to be the task of the politicians, and, secondly, by maintaining suspicion towards political parties as appropriate agents to pursue politics in the name of the nation. From this perspective Latvian national identity, then, can explain why there is low support in the Latvian public towards the European Union: European integration is a project promoted by the political elite and it can only acquire public support when linked with the idea of the nation itself. Otherwise, because the nation and political parties are separated in the discursive level, the European Union is a project that 'belongs' to parties, not the nation. But to further explore this argument it is necessary to look upon the contemporary discourses about the EU in Latvia.

#### **4. 'THE PEOPLE' IN THE DEBATE ABOUT LATVIA'S EU PRESIDENCY**

Latvia assumed post of the presidency of the Council of the European Union for the first six months of 2015. The presidency, viewed eagerly, even anxiously, was received as a test for the maturity of Latvia as an EU member as well as a chance to have some long awaited spotlight within the EU<sup>4</sup>. When end of the presidency was approaching by the last weeks of June, in the air was resolution – the ‘test’ was passed successfully and Latvian officials proudly shared good impressions about the Latvian presidency that they had heard in Brussels<sup>5</sup>.

In line with the aim of the thesis – to understand differences in opinion about the EU – the EU presidency makes a good case for studying discourses on Europe in Latvia. However, in light of the argumentation presented in the preceding chapters, the focus here is not on the discursive construction of Europe itself but on the construction of the subject that in Latvian context speaks about Europe. The chapter thus examines the official and the public debate about the EU presidency in order to find out what identity of Latvian nation-state appears in regard to Latvia's belonging to Europe. The argument, derived from the analysis of historically rooted discourses on ‘the nation’ and ‘the state’, was that the perception of Europe in Latvia is affected by difference ascribed to the state and the nation in field of political action, namely, that the ‘the people’ play almost no role in what is considered to be ‘state’s’ realm of action. The task in studying the debate about the Latvian presidency is to examine this argument by exploring which are those basic categories constituting ‘we’ or Latvian collectiveness and the relation that is constructed between this subject/subjects and Europe.

##### **4.1. Blocking the popular subjectivity: official discourse**

During the presidency's run, majority of statements published in the media about the presidency were made by two political figures: the prime minister Laimdota Straujuma and the foreign affairs minister Edgars Rinkevičs. Both come from the ruling party of the coalition the

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, ‘‘Latvian presidency in the EU Council – six months in the spotlight’’ ([in Latvian], Delfi, 02.01.2015) or the statement by the Prime Minister Laimdota Straujuma in the presidency's conclusion: ‘‘We showed that Latvia is not a provincial, that ministers of Latvia and officials of Latvia worked really good’’ (Leitāns, Strazdiņa, 30.06.2015)

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, ‘‘Government takes pride in Latvia's EU Presidency achievements’’ (LSM, 29.06.2015) or ‘‘Šteinbuka: the EP jokes – for fast decision-making the presidency should be entrusted to Latvia’’ ([in Latvian] LSM, 30.06.2015) where Head of the European Commission Representation reiterate compliments from colleagues the Commissioners.

*Unity*. Their statements are taken to express the position of the government and form the dominant voice in the overall political discourse on the EU presidency.

The political discourse in regard to the EU presidency during these six months placed the relation between Latvia and Europe in a rather interesting position. Before the beginning of the presidency Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasized that ‘Latvia will be a responsible, pragmatic, and honest broker, delivering the best results for the benefit of all EU member states’ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, 28.11.2014). ‘Honest broker’, a term also referenced also in literature about member state approaches towards the EU presidency (e.g. Panke, 2008:9-10) refers to state setting aside of promoting any specific interests when in the post but work in order to move common political agenda forward by trying to achieve consensus between different national positions. This perspective successively constituted the main framework of Latvian official outlook on the presidency.

However, an interesting question that arises here is how this position was negotiated within domestic sphere of political subjectivity, that is, how it was related to the ‘we’ that set those (or any other) goals for the presidency. The answer lies in the way Straujuma and Rinkevičs made statements in context of the presidency: they did it from the point of view of Europe. For the time of the presidency, Latvia had become one with Europe, or at least as a mediator of Europe within the EU itself and globally. This claim possibly is difficult to grasp but it becomes clearer in cases when the government was domestically pressured with what could be understood as Latvia’s national interests. Such case, for example, was the question whether the president of Latvia should respond to invitation from Russia to participate in the 9 May Victory Parade in Moscow. Since the precedent of such visit was established by then president Vaira Vīķe Freiberga in 2005, the question whether to go has remained an issue for successive presidents (Vīķe Freiberga has remained the only one who has made the trip). As media debate about this was opened in 2015, to an interview question whether the president Andris Bērziņš will go to Moscow PM Straujuma responded that Latvia as the presidency of the EU Council at the moment builds its relations with Russia from Europe’s point of view and this has to be taken into account in deciding about the visit: ‘We are the presiding state which maintains this dialogue [with Russia] already in the name of Europe’ (Latvijas Avīze, 06.01.2015). In the same vein, Rinkevičs explained:

I first would like to discuss this question with the president directly, not through the press. But I would like to note that also here the context should be taken into account, [that] we are the presiding state therefore such or other decision will be viewed also in this context. [With] the situation that now has developed in Europe, at the moment I really would like to see united stance by the European Union, this should be more discussed within the EU before such decisions are made.

(BNS, 05.01.2015)

Another such instance was when Latvia did not join the declaration to counteract Russian propaganda called by Estonia, Lithuania, the United Kingdom and Denmark. Rinkevičs was summoned in the parliament by the coalition partners the *National Unity* to answer why Latvia has distanced itself from the declaration. As Jānis Dombrova, representative from the *National Unity*, argued: 'This was the question where Latvia could participate in the call by the four countries to clearly show that this is one of the presidency priorities as well as demonstrate the unity of the Baltic states in this question.' Rimševics reply was that: '*We as the presidency* [my emphasis] decided to guide realization of these ideas as our priority not as political declaration that disappears somewhere later.. The question is whether we practically try to realize these ideas and gather countries support for them or that we create beautiful political declaration so to look really good.' (BNS, 21.01.2015) Effectively, he connected Latvia's position in this situation with that of Europe as a whole.

Thus it is difficult to see what delineates identities of Latvia and Europe in context of the presidency as they seem to express the same voice; while the available statements give no hint on perceived relation between the two, they also never really show attempt to distinguish between them. Now, the important question is how the 'Latvian people' or popular subjectivity fit into this picture. On the surface, in the political statements on Europe and Latvia's presidency usually figures the broad categories of 'we' and 'Latvia'. But what is understood with these words precisely? The symbolically rich concept of the nation does not appear in political discourse almost at all; exemplary exception is when Straujuma talked about support and understanding between Europe's nations (*Eiropas tautām*) in context of the Charlie Hebdo attacks in France. However, it was not done when addressing domestic audiences but the European Parliament. In speech, where she said:

I use this representative forum of Europe's nations to invite everyone of us and every person to even greater respect for different culture and to a new level of trust between

nations. In this time of tension when terrorism would like to force on us ever new escalation, ever wider clashes between religions, push us towards violence, we have to become more humane. We have to continue learn about other cultures so our minds would not be possible to cloud with demagogy or interpretation of distorted facts.

(Latvijas Avīze, 14.01.2015)

Straujuma invoked the idea of the nation from the Latvian perspective, both referring to symbolic role of the parliament as the voice of the nation as well as emphasizing the role of culture in communication between the people of Europe. Yet the political role of the nation in this case was not pronounced; the role of the Europe's nations (different 'people' of Europe) was to communicate through culture not politics. However, if the Prime Minister Straujuma did speak about 'the people' in European context, she did not speak about the nation in domestic context. In the domestic context 'the people' did not appear in discourses about the EU at all; these are only the politicians and the officials that act on European matters.

Earlier in the thesis I argued that the discourse on the nation and the state is structured so that the nation does not have political responsibility and any political action is entirely delegated to the state. Perhaps therefore it is difficult to find reference to the nation/the people in the politicians' statements. However, it is clear that there is still implicit relationship between the nation/the people and the state established in the political discourse, and the task is to understand what kind of a relationship it is. In the context of the EU presidency Latvian politicians presented Latvia as a unified whole, acting in the name of Europe; there seemingly was no difference between the nation and the state. Yet the only acting subject that appeared in the political discourse on the EU presidency was the government, the ministers and the officials. It was their task to successfully conduct the presidency while the role of the people in it was either unknown or distanced. In the beginning of the presidency Straujuma remarked that 'if we all together as a team, all people of Latvia will show ourselves in a positive light and will be successful in the presidency, I will be very glad.' (LSM, 08.01.2015) Even this statement where supposedly reference on popular subjectivity through 'all people of Latvia' is made, it actually was denied through representing Latvia's relations with Europe as abiding the rules and showing good behaviour instead of pursuing popular – national – interests. With the presidency unfolding, however, the agency of the people disappeared completely; in any of the following statements regarding the presidency only the government or the ministry officials were mentioned; the 'team' appeared to be quite limited. At some point Straujuma thanked all the ministers for their

efforts during the presidency: '[To] all ministers I express a great gratitude because every minister in their place has done all the work' (BNS, 31.03.2015) It was one of the not so many statements that were made for domestic audiences about the presidency which sums up the main focus of what it meant for Latvia: it was assignment for the government.

The interview with Rinkevičs where he as well reflected about the Latvian presidency, exemplifies this most markedly. First he underlined: 'I can say assuredly, with full responsibility, we have had no fiasco...On the contrary, [I] hear good words about how professionally work our ministers and delegacy in Brussels.' (Neatkarīga Rīta avīze, 30.03.2015) Second, on the question about little information on the presidency in Latvia's regions and 'possible fiascos' Rinkevičs response was revealing in regard to image of the people and the government. He wondered what the people were expecting from the presidency and guessed whether they:

Would like some drama where [someone] goes away from the Council by slashing the door or special element of amusement?... In my opinion, that everything happens so calmly, from the bureaucratic and political opinion is an achievement... Some were thinking [about the presidency] that on the streets will be ongoing carnival and amusement park, others were thinking that we will run to Brussels hounded times but nor the first, not the second is true. For Latvia's officials and politicians it is an experience. To pull it all together.'

(Neatkarīga Rīta avīze, 30.03.2015)

He marked that the presidency was just half-way done and its impact the people will start to feel only by the end of it or in a while after its conclusion. The public thus was depicted to be in a position of either onlooker and/or receiver of whatever the government achieved during the presidency.

#### **4.2. Interests but not the voice: the public debate**

In the previous section I established that the official discourse on the EU presidency was built around the idea that Latvia expresses the opinion of Europe and that at the same time by 'Latvia' was meant only the political elite. It is therefore interesting to see how to this position and to Latvia's EU presidency generally responded other sides involved in the public discourse. This part will review how the presidency was discussed in the main newspaper comment and opinion sections, and how these voices participated in the overall debate about the presidency.

One of the articles that were published in the beginning of the presidency had a significant title: 'Presidency that stole the government' (Lasmanis, 11.02.2015) In the article as a claim it was discussed by several experts in connection with the assumption that the ministries and the government were completely occupied with the presidency, and so that any national issues were largely put on hold. Overall the article did not press this as the case yet in a certain sense the title signifies discourse that was characteristic to wide array of public comments about the presidency. The argument, expanded in different variations, focused on need to express Latvia's own interests and ability to determine priorities that, as observers felt, were overshadowed by the presidency.

The position that was in basis of these understanding was two-folded: on the one hand, it was agreed that the EU presidency is a very important opportunity and responsibility for Latvia, and did not in any way downplay or question its necessity. On the other hand, the objections stemmed from the perceived lack of Latvia in grasping this opportunity to emphasize *national* interests and concerns.

In this perspective there were not concrete outline of what those interests are and goals that they would lead to<sup>6</sup>, instead the focus was on emphasizing the responsibility of politicians to distinguish the position of Latvia among the European and the world countries in more general terms. So, for example, one commentator wrote:

It is worse, if, for example, political commentators in the West do not find a reason to single out role of Latvia in some sort of connection, let say even in the connection with Ukraine crisis. Our highest officials' response to events is usually so dull that Latvia's opinion in Europe's major press is left out as, it seems, it is not too much demanded. Seems, that with foreign minister's Rinkevičs efforts it is not enough for, to use this phrase, 'we as the presidency', would be more noted and, the most important, taken into account. When then Riga think to express more about the issues important for the world and the Baltic states if not now? Of course, 'loud screaming do not mean active position' (as said by [president] Andris Bērziņš) but in today's age of political 'stories' [one's] position should be let know, moreover not only once and clearly.

(Šmits, 20.02.2015)

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<sup>6</sup> However, the cases where the need for Latvia's opinion was emphasized mostly were issues related to Russia and the geopolitical situation.

The paragraph quoted above and also the one mentioned below show that the arguments about the need to express Latvia's opinion formulated it a problem that is more deeply rooted in the national political context than the occasion of the EU presidency would show:

In the end of the year the prime minister and the minister of foreign affairs repeatedly emphasized that the presidency for our state is an honour and test in front of the whole European Union. Overall agreeing to that, [I] would like to understand if also evaluated is the examination of state's dignity, result of which is important for first of all Latvia's society. Concern is evolving that, for a half of year when Latvia gets into the role of expressing the opinion of the EU's states, the traditional timidity will accompany our men of power also in the situations when history of Latvia and the geopolitical events dictates to add [our] own verse to the big song of the choir.

(Zīle, 12.01.2015)

However, the most significant aspect in the context of the thesis was the public debate's overall emphasis on the politicians as the only actively involved actors in regard to the EU presidency. Although the society was part of the depicting Latvia's EU presidency as exemplified in the above quotation, they essentially received the same role of onlookers and receivers that was already illustrated by statements in the official discourse. The task of dealing with the EU presidency in any of its dimensions was understood as exclusively given to the politicians and the officials. Therefore the meaning of 'us' and 'Latvia' that was invoked during the arguments about the EU and the presidency was firstly associated with the political establishment. In one of the comments it was stated most directly:

And it is possible to agree with the prime minister - it would be truly excellent *if Latvia in person of its politicians and officials* [my emphasis] instead of exemplary carrying out the honour that the state has received would especially actively use this opportunity for, within its limits, not only reaching solutions of problems relevant to whole of Europe but also be able to successfully lobby questions especially relevant for our state – for agricultural workers, for entrepreneurs, for ordinary men.

(Gūte, 09.01.2015)

In the overall discourse on the EU presidency there was no alternative discursive routes presented of the connection between Europe and Latvia as that of between the politicians and Europe. In other words, in Latvia's relations with Europe 'the people' were not directly involved; Latvia in this case was entirely embodied by the government. The response in the public

discourse was to require inclusion of popular issues in state's policy for the EU presidency; it was not a demand to include 'the people' as a subject in relations to Europe but transform the government's positioning of the EU presidency as the assignment done for Europe to that of pursuing national interests. How this comment described:

Until now we have been overly exemplary in carrying out demands but rather unsuccessful and passive in protecting our own interests. Precisely this half a year will show how mature are Latvian politicians for the sake of their nation to be able to use tools that allow speak about our interests speak more loudly and actively, especially emphasizing that by definition all the member states of the EU still are equal.

(Güte, 09.01.2015)

However, the same comment also illustrates how official discourse did not challenge the general constellation of the 'nation-state': the only agency in context of Europe was given to the politicians and the officials; it was the Latvian politicians who spoke for the nation, not the nation itself.

#### **4.3. The tension between 'the people' and politics**

This section delves deeper into the articulation of 'the people' and their relationship with politics that has been constructed in the public discourses. The previous two sections showed how for the Latvian people has overall been ascribed essentially passive role without active agency in European politics. In this section I explore the relationship between 'the people' and politics which is highly significant in the context of Latvia's EU membership. The question, thus, is how the construction of 'the people' is linked with the notion of the state and actors that have been ascribed with political authority.

This section focuses on the public discourses in the newspaper opinion and commentary articles about the EU presidency as it was established earlier that in the official discourse 'the people' have limited or almost no place at all and only subjects that politicians speak in the context of Latvia's politics in the EU are themselves. The interesting question is how then 'the people' have been constructed in the public domain which supposedly represents their voice. Conversely, in order to understand the relationship between 'the people' and the state it is necessary to take into account the portrayal of politics in domestic discursive sphere. I argue that

this description is largely metapolitical thus excluding politics as a legitimate activity to achieve popularly postulated goals.

However, first it is necessary to look how ‘the people’ have been characterized in the public discourse. Earlier in the thesis it was established that the ‘Latvian people’ is largely understood as an ethnically and culturally defined category – ancient, linguistically tied collective that has lived on its land for centuries. This understanding is put as the basis of defining the nation, which, politically for the first time was done during the Ulmanis authoritarian regime from 1934 until 1939, and, then, reinstated by the majority of political parties (those that were directed towards the ethnic Latvian audience) after regaining of the independence in 1991. The previous chapter illustrated the argument put forward in the thesis about how ‘the people’ are situated in the dominant constellation of the nation-state, namely, that they are given a symbolic role to signify the origins of the state but not agency in politics. In the post-foundationalist categories this means that ‘the people’ are constructed to stand beyond politics as the central reference of political legitimacy but do not embody political subjectivity on its own. In the Latvian nation-state model only institutionalized actors retain political subjectivity. The aspect that I wish to emphasize in this section is the relationship between ‘the people’ and institutionalized politics that is portrayed in the debate about the EU presidency. Important part of this discourse is the depiction of ‘the people’ as unprepared and inexperienced to ‘do politics’, even proposing that without externally imposed (but valuable) norms, the people by themselves would never be able to create fully functioning political institutions:

If we look at the truth, we see that our society generally is ill prepared to organize a self-sufficient state, and it is better to not imagine what our state would look like, if we would live on a lonely island in an ocean and do everything we want. Fortunately, it is not the case and we are forced to comply with those norms of civilization that exist in the world. Latvia has decided to side with Europe, how it has done already from the 13th century. Sadly, for a long time we have lived under, let’s say, not so European state, and it has left its marks on the peoples’ thinking.

(Latkovskis, 16.01.2015)

Latvian political scientist and commentator Ivars Ījabs underlines this assumption, although in a less obvious way, by saying that:

There is also hope that over time we all together will evolve towards truly remarkable and respectable presidents. In the opposite case, we will have to do something of which, as it seems, silently dream not few from the Latvian intelligentsia. Namely, to ask Washington or Brussels to assign us a governor general, that would free us from the need to make complicated decisions.

(Ījabs, 12.05.2015)

On the hand, he dismisses the view, in his words characteristic for many Latvian intellectual figures, that the people politically need to be guided by external actors, that respectively can be identified with the ‘norms of civilization’. On the other hand, Ījab’s comment is embedded in the same perspective which portrays ‘the people’ as immature and being in some development stage in their road to ‘proper’ politics. The problematic aspect within this characterization is the exchange of real, current politics with some ideal form of politics that ‘the people’ are in their way to understand. It signifies metapolitical approach, although in a bit complex way, to the political domain where actual political process is forsaken in the name of some idealized version of politics. This view, in turn, obstructs the constitution of political identities in existing reality. It can be argued that it complements the arche-political perspective on the nation-state, by, firstly, constructing ‘the people’ as not yet ready to take political decisions which should be better left to agents specially designed for this purpose, and, secondly, by constructing politics as means to achieve some higher goals that, however, never are really defined. The fact that remains is the discursive construction of unsuitability of the political parties and the politicians to achieve these goals.

In an article that discusses neglect of domestic political issues by the government during the time of the EU presidency, the author explains why the particular issue – creating a better system for the evaluation of the head of the Latvia’s Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau – will not be important for the politicians:

People, who have not lost faith in the good in this life, say that in the following weeks interest in these propositions will be renewed, but somehow it seems that those, who should do the consideration, will busily look in their watches to not miss the ‘honor to represent the state’ in yet another coffee drinking with guests from abroad.

(Zanders, 21.01.2015)

The politicians' 'honor to represent the state' in the quote is put in parenthesis, thus emphasizing ironic view of politicians 'real' agenda which reflects a broader view that politicians use their status to pursue some personal, unpopular interests. The idea that the government's work during the presidency is not directed towards national interests underlines the public discourse, as how presented also in the previous section. Yet important factor in this perspective is not that the European Union as a political framework obstructs to pursue national interests but that the politicians are unwilling to pursue these goals. In this context it is also necessary to remind the construction of the EU presidency in the official discourse as an assignment for the government which blocks direct voice of popular subject. Within this perspective, the public response is precisely that of alienation from the presidency as a popular matter instead emphasizing selfishness of the political elite. Like in this comment which describes a government meeting where the prime minister and other ministers are congratulating themselves about work done halfway through the presidency. Author ironically describes: 'The grand finale came with collective complaining that after the presidency there would be a feeling of emptiness. Of course – because there is nothing to do in Latvia, it is not that interesting, it is not same feeling.' (Zanders, 01.04.2015)

This view places the EU presidency as somewhat personal matter for the politicians, expressed in having a pleasant time in relation to the EU proceedings that have no connection with the nation. It is possible to argue in this way because it is based on a deeper embedded understanding about politics as corrupt and uninterested in the needs of 'the people'. Elsewhere, another commentator reflects on recent events that signify the supposed achievements of Latvia. She conveniently distinguishes between significant events for the state and the officials like the Eastern Partnership summit in Riga, that took place on 21-22 May, and for events significant for the nation like the high place of Latvian contestant in the Eurovision in that same week. Both events as regarded as opportunity to project a better image for Latvia in the world. However, author continues:

But, if we look at the kitchen of Latvia's politics, especially in regard to the elections of the president, there appears a question – what is the sense of this image, if behind it there is dust? We want to shine with more than one hundred million (the State Control even has calculated 112 millions) worth EU presidency, but in our inner order and political culture we fall short of what we want show off to the outside.

(Lulle, 26.05.2015)

The main problem with the political culture, which prohibits articulate and achieve political goals, in this view is that ultimately ‘this is not fight by us, society, voters; this is fight between Andris [Šķēle], Solvita [Āboltiņa] and Aivars [Lembergs] [the central figures for the major political parties] Not for Latvia’s image’(Lulle, 26.05.2015). That is, while the nation is uninvolved in politics, the political parties and their leaders struggle for their own interests that have no relation with the people. In context of Latvia’s membership in the EU it means that goals postulated for state’s European policy are not perceived as constituted by the popular subject – ‘the people’ – themselves but by politicians that use this as opportunity to serve their own interests. Another comment, which reflects on the official discourse about the outcomes of the EU presidency, exemplifies this most markedly:

It would be necessary to remind here that many politicians mislead the society, Latvia did not achieve anything. Decisions on data security, on reducing the roaming fees of the mobile services, etc. are the achievement of the EU. The adoption of these decision just was synchronous (and also accidental) with that short moment when the presidency of Latvia took place. Juncker’s investment plan is the merit of the European Commission, not Latvia! [...] On the other hand, the presidency allowed to those, who got to the planning of its expenses, to endow their friends with generous but dubious procurements – to stage operas and concerts [reference to opera *Valentina* that was staged in Germany as part of the Latvia’s EU presidency cultural programme], to go on trips of political tourism, etc. By tag of the presidency, it was possible to finance everything.

(Paiders, 02.07.2015)

This example illustrates, firstly, how the public is disassociated from the positioning of Latvia in Europe by denying that politics by the European institutions involve Latvia’s agency, and, secondly, in a move that explains the first factor, how the politicians use the facade of the European issues to achieve their own narrow goals.

This chapter set out to determine who is the subject in the relations between Latvia and Europe through examining the debate during the period, when Latvia assumed the presidency of the EU Council. It was done by employing the conceptual lens of the constitution of political subjectivity and against the background of analysis of historically sedimented discourses on the ‘nation-state’ which established that in the Latvian discursive context the nation-state is

imagined in arche-political way as a organic body, where for ‘the state’ is prescribed all political authority while ‘the people’ embody linguistic-cultural locus of the collective. However, the link between ‘the state’ and ‘the people’ is under constant stress whether the the state truthfully embody the will of the people. Such stress is best expressed in metapolitical description of politicians who are viewed with mistrust towards their ‘real’ goals and, subsequently, excluded from the midst of ‘the people’. This argument is important in discussing the positioning of Latvian identity in the political and public debate about Europe.

The analysis of official and public discourses in case of the EU presidency showed that ‘the people’ indeed are not presented as involved in Latvia’s relations with Europe. Neither the concept of ‘*tauta*’, nor other concepts that could describe collectiveness, such as the society (*sabiedrība*) or the inhabitants (*iedzīvotāji*) are important elements in the discourse on Europe in Latvia. Instead, it is established as a common-sense that Latvia in Europe is exclusively represented through politicians, and the relationship between the people and the government is not even discussed in this discourse.

In context of Latvia’s European politics, the analysis thus confirms the argument that ‘the people’, viewed in the Kalyvas scheme of three bodies of ‘the people’, overall are not constructed to be part of ordinary political process. In the official discourse there is no presence of extraordinary body of ‘the people’: nor in its form of before the constitution, nor next-to-the constitution; meanwhile in the public discourse ‘the people’ appear as a body that observes politics and expects its interests to be fulfilled through political processes but itself stays uninvolved – in this view ‘the people’ are continually depicted as standing beside politics. In domestic discursive field the Latvian people thus are generally constructed as residing away from politics while observing the process with expectations, how the commentaries, arguing about the need to emphasize Latvia’s priorities during the EU presidency, illustrated. Such division of tasks between ‘the people’ and ‘the state’, I argue, reflects the arche-political construction of the Latvian community where politics is reserved for solely the institutions and its agents, blocking the politically constitutive power of demos. However, such division of tasks between a demos and a state may not be unique to Latvia, and it would valuable to briefly explore its significance in a wider context.

As argued by Joenniemi (2002), the Finnish case is in several dimensions similar to the one of Latvia. Also in Finland the state as a political actor is distinguished from the nation as

ethnic and cultural collective. However, Finland's overall positive perception of the EU (which marks it different from its sceptic Nordic neighbours) has been explained precisely with the ability to separate the role of the nation and the state, and construct the relations with Europe in name of the state while the nation maintains in-directly associated with it and thus leave less reason to be concerned about threat to cultural identity as in the cases where the nation/state meanings are much more intertwined. It seems that in the Latvian case a similar configuration of the nation – state relationship results in a different outcome. The difference lies in precisely the arche-political mode that the Latvian nation is imagined: in Finland the nation is seen to maintain and reproduce its identity irrespectively of the political framework in which it is situated, while in Latvia, in the nation-state, once it exists, the nation and the state forms a single organic body where the people are responsible for the nation's spirit and the state for politics. So, although in both Finland and Latvia 'the people' are conceived as a cultural community which is distinguished from the state, in the Finnish case the nation is in flexible relation with the state (or whatever form the political framework takes – for example, an empire) whereas in Latvia the state can only exist if it is conceived as natural extension of the nation.

When this link, constructed as natural, is perceived as obstructed it is done through metapolitics: describing the ordinary political process as corrupt and unresponsive to the 'true' needs of the nation. The chapter revealed how 'the people' themselves as portrayed as not mature enough to make political decisions and placed to give the political initiative to specially designed institutions. The politics in this view thus starts not from 'the people' but from the institutions. The arche-political construction of the nation-state, that blocks 'the people' from direct political agency, is accompanied with metapolitical tradition through which political goals, postulated and achieved during the Latvia's EU presidency are not constructed as part of the interests of 'the people', but as a cover up for realizing narrow interests of political elite whose goals are not identified with those of the nation.

It is true that European project generally has been called out as being designed by the political elites without allowing much public participation. However, this thesis maintains that the most important in how a state's European identity is constructed internally are the particular discourses on nation/state into which this European identity is projected. Finland is the case in point. Thus the fact that 'the people' are only indirectly connected with Europe in Latvian discursive context is problematic because of the corrupt image of politics that has taken the

central place in how the political parties and the politicians are depicted in Latvia. There is lack of positive elements that link the people and the politicians while the discourse on political parties as self-interested and disregarding interests of ‘the people’ is historically rooted and still present. How showed the section on the relationship between ‘the people’ and politics, elements of this discourse often appeared in the debate on the EU presidency as, for example, when one of the commentators, after bashing the officials for their inability to emphasize national interests, concluded that the outcome of the presidency was that: ‘ministries got to the trough and zealously fed themselves for a half a year’. This statement reflects the distinction between ‘us – the people’ and ‘them – in power’ that characterizes a crucial dimension in the nation/state relationship in Latvia: that what the politicians do is of little importance for ‘us – the people’. If this dimension continues to regulate internal debate about politics, the dominant way of putting only the politicians as actors in context of Europe will only prove to be detrimental to the public opinion about the EU in Latvia.

Overall, the arche-political construction of the nation-state and metapolitical response to politics create a two-fold pressure on formulation of European policy in the Latvian context. On the one hand, ‘the people’ are not engaged in the state’s relation with Europe as the only discursive link between Latvia and Europe is build between the politicians and Europe. In the Latvian political and public discourse on Europe the only subject is the government. Because the state is imagined to be in close link with the nation, the EU as alternative political framework can be constructed as a threat to the nation-state relationship. On the other hand, the link constructed between ‘the people’ and ‘the state’ triggers a response where politics and the politicians are depicted as corrupt and not interested in the affairs of the nation, and thus the issues articulated in the Latvia’s EU policy are regarded as unpopular and alienated from ‘the people’.

## CONCLUSION

The initial impetus for my research was given by the desire to explain the low public support for the EU in Latvia and the large share of undecided respondents against the backdrop of unequivocal support for the EU by the government and the wider political elites. My attempt to answer this question, however, went into a deeper level than that of Latvia's EU membership; it first postulated the need to examine the construction of the Latvian national identity. The idea that guided these efforts was that project as politically significant as the European Union would require to be meaningfully embedded in nationally significant discursive structures. The question that followed was: could there be specific aspects in the way how the Latvian national identity is structured that would explain the difference between the public and the politicians in their attitude towards the EU? My argument, presented in this thesis, is that there indeed are such factors in how the Latvian discourses of the 'nation-state' are reproduced that limit the public interest about European issues. In interpreting these factors I relied upon the post-foundationalist perspective of politics which views political process as a constitutive activity. Thus I analyzed the understandings of the 'Latvian people' and 'the state' from a perspective of positioning a subject in democratic societies, and I concluded that the specific constellation of 'the people' and 'the state' in Latvia blocks popular subjectivity in the realm of politics, which consequently negatively affects the peoples' sense of agency regarding EU membership.

The theoretical frame of the thesis is largely based on the work by three authors – Jacques Rancière, Andreas Kalyvas and Ole Wæver who all can be regarded as post-foundationalist authors in a sense how they view the establishment of social structures as fluid and contingent. In this context the special contribution of Rancière and Kalyvas, emphasized in the thesis, was their arguments of the constitution of a democratic political order, and a place which in this order holds the unseizable wielder of its power – the demos or 'the people'. It is precisely in the heart of the arguments by both authors that the constituted order – police in Rancière's words, ordinary politics in Kalyvas terminology – is in constant tension and struggle with the yet-unconstituted voice of the unrepresented, which in order to target the constituted order with their demands, embody them within their expression as 'the people' that are in the basis of this legitimate order, thus pursuing what is for Rancière politics and for Kalyvas extraordinary politics. Theirs is a view which places the popular subject in the centre of political theory, representation of which is

the source of 'proper' politics in all democratic societies. My aim, in the light the distanced attitude towards the EU in the Latvian society, was to find out how this process of political subjectification is carried out in Latvia.

It was done by adding the perspective of Wæver and his collaborators, who in their work proved the significance of historically embedded discourses on the 'nation-state' in articulating political projects, including that concerning the European Union, in a particular domestic spheres. By employing lens of the constitution of political subjectivity, I analyzed the articulations of Latvian 'nation-state' that have evolved over time. My main conclusion is that the 'Latvian people' has continually been reproduced as essentially cultural identity; its subjectivity is not constituted in the domain of politics but that of culture – traditions, folksongs and rural lifestyle. By acquiring the state this understanding of 'the people' is not transformed – 'the state' does not become a domain where the popular subjectivity can be played out as 'the people' is already established as essentially given fact. The role of 'the state' in these conditions is to take care of politics thus signifying arche-political mode of blocking popular politics. The other side of the coin of this constellation is the constant metapolitical suspicion towards the political parties in pursuing politics in the name of the nation. The ideal of the state taking care of the nation is always alive while the political reality is always suspected as untruthful and false in regard to this ideal.

The implications of these relationships between the nation and the state, and between the nation and the politicians are highly visible in the context of Latvia's EU membership, which in this case was illustrated by the debate on Latvia's presidency in the EU Council. In the official discourse the EU presidency was constructed as an issue that concerns only the government and officials, and its formulation as a popular matter, that is, as arising from the political subjectivity of 'the people', was precluded. The public response challenged this view in a way how it required to include in the government's positioning of the presidency issues that were considered to represent the 'Latvian people'. The perceived lack of such positioning was identified as yet another example of the government's neglect towards the nation, and the EU presidency overall characterized as opportunity for politicians to carry out 'dirty' politics through emphasizing alleged corruption cases and other misdemeanours.

The public response, however, did not challenge the dominant, arche-political construction of Latvian nation-state as did not question the place of 'the people' in how political

goals are defined. In the public discourse the Latvian people still is a passive body of people that wait for politics to be done in their name; their political subjectivity is in-direct, and in the political domain non-existent. This is very important factor, because the problem in the perspective of the thesis, is not the one that was articulated in the public discourse, namely, that more popular issues should be included in Latvia's European policy but that these issues should stem from politics as envisioned by Rancière: emerging from the representations of 'the people' in conditions of political struggle. This, without doubt, is a challenging task as it would require transform the static identity of the 'Latvian people' but in the future it would be more fruitful in reducing metapolitical tradition of distrust towards the politicians and bringing politics forward as a ground for genuine social action. It would bring sense of agency to the Latvian people which, at the present, seems to be lacking and negatively affects their attitude towards the Latvia's EU membership.

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