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MYTHS AND CONFLICT IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

A training manual in critical thinking

March 2013

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Layout by D. R. ink

Myths and Conflict in the South Caucasus

A training manual in critical thinking promoting understanding of conflict-related myths and their impact at societal and individual levels

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1   Mediation and Dialogue: A Reflection of 15 years of Conflict Transformation Initiatives (2012). London International Alert. Available at http://www.international-alert.org/es/node/4529

2   O. Karpenko and J. Javakhishvili (Eds.) (2013) Myths and Conflict: Instrumentalisation of Historical Narratives. London International Alert. Available at http://www.international-alert.org/resources/publications/myths-and-conflict-south-caucasus-vol-1-english; J. Javakhishvili and L. Kvarchelia (Eds.) (2013) Myths and Conflict: Instrumentalisation of Conflict in Political Discourse. London: International Alert. Available at http://www.international-alert.org/resources/publications/myths-and-conflict-south-caucasus-vol-2-english

INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of this training manual is to provide a methodological tool for experts in conflict transformation. Using a post-modernist approach, the training manual offers professionals and representatives of civil society working in a context of protracted conflicts a formula and conceptual toolbox to enable them to work on overcoming essentialist clichés and stereotypes prevalent in societies in conflict and which play a role in further fuelling those conflicts.

The main focus of our methodology is societal myths. Our understanding of societal myths is informed by the work of the famous French philosopher Roland Barthes (1919–1980). According to Barthes, a myth is a special communication system, transmitting a message and a set of meanings or creating a hidden ideological discourse that tries to change the situation in accordance with the values of the myth-forming entity. Barthes points out that myths imply certain power relations that are seen as a natural state of affairs.[1]

Societies in a state of conflict – especially "frozen conflict", which remains stagnant for decades – experience its impact at all levels. The unresolved conflict affects the social, economic and political life of a community, region or country. A social consensus characterising the conflict takes root in society: "We're right, they're not"; "we're good, they're not". Such basic consensual assumptions in society reflect the psychological phenomena of "victim" mentality (that of the opposing side, the opponent) and "enemy image", which are cultivated in the public consciousness and which have become mythologems that shape the mainstream of public life.

Research carried out within the framework of International Alert's "South Caucasus Mediation and Dialogue Initiative" shows that enemy images in the South Caucasus are often utilised in domestic politics.[2] Specifically, the theme of conflict is often used to justify deviations from the path of democratic development (i.e. "*There is no time for democracy with the enemy on our doorstep*"); or to discredit a political opponent in the domestic politics (i.e. "*They – our domestic political opponents – are grist to the mill of the enemy*"); or to manipulate public opinion by labelling someone a "traitor", curbing dissent and freedom of thought by portraying their actions as potentially "betrayal" and thus "dangerous".

With this reality in mind, we propose a methodology to facilitate reflection on the myths prevalent in societies associated with the ongoing conflicts. The manual can be used in a variety of trainings for different target groups such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), journalists, students, and teachers of civic education, and other social and professional target groups. The manual provides training participants with an opportunity to distance themselves from their own contexts as far as possible and take an outsider's look at the state of affairs in their respective communities – while firmly rooted in a solid academic research, conceptual apparatus and methodology.

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1   R. Barthes (1957). *Mythologies*.
2   G. Baghdasaryan (2013). '"Working the enemy's mill" – putting the brake on internal development', in J. Javakhishvili and L. Kvarchelia (Eds.) *Myths and Conflict: Instrumentalisation of Conflict in Political Discourse*. London: International Alert.

Content

The training module consists of five main sections:

1. **Myth as a form of social consensus:** This section helps participants to understand the concept of social consensus and its influence, and to reflect upon social consensuses prevalent in the participants' respective communities and the impact of social consensus on individual and public life; it also helps participants to formulate their own attitudes to the particular social consensuses highlighted;

2. **Societal trauma and conflict:** This section introduces participants to the concept of societal trauma and the associated phenomena of "victimhood" and "enemy image"; participants can analyse the impact of these phenomena on conflict dynamics, familiarise themselves with the psychological mechanisms that give rise to societal trauma and how to overcome it;

3. **Heroes, anti-heroes, history textbooks and narratives:** This section helps participants to understand the role of heroes and anti-heroes in society; participants are given the opportunity to understand history as a narrative, and understand the role of narrator; participants are also given the opportunity to practise identifying discourses woven into the narratives;

4. **Political manipulation and political technologies:** This section invites participants to reflect upon political manipulation of the theme of conflict, societal trauma and related phenomena; the session is aimed at increasing sensitivity to such manipulation.

5. **Media literacy and conflict:** This section gives participants the opportunity to enhance their media literacy, to learn to recognise and reflect upon "spin", and to think about media ethics, in particular, the ethics of conflict reporting.

These five components combine to form a single methodological approach to raise the training participants' awareness of the myths and mythologems present in their respective communities and to inspire them to contribute to the demythologisation of social and political discourses.

Methodology

The training methodology is interactive and insight-oriented. It does not impose a particular set of views, approaches or values on to its participants but provides food for thought and reflection on various socio-psychological phenomena. The methodology encourages a creative approach to facilitation, which promotes insight among the participants. Trainers/facilitators have a "treasure box" of methods at their disposal such as mini-lectures, role-play, group work, video clips, analysis of textbooks and media reports, etc. Each section/topic begins with exercises as part of the insight-oriented methodology. Through the exercise, participants get a unique experience providing insights into the particular topic. Exercises are then followed by a short, interactive lecture with participant involvement. The overall structure of the training is as follows:

- Outline of the formula of the session; topics in chronological order; key topics; exercises; and approximate content of lectures on each topic;
- Glossary of key concepts/terms for each topic;
- Recommended reading, including studies conducted within the framework of the project on myths and conflict by International Alert;
- Handouts;
- PowerPoint presentations

While the module is clearly structured, it is designed so that an experienced facilitator can adapt it according to their own professional skills and also tailor it to the needs and appropriate level for the particular target group in question. Nevertheless, it is important that the trainer does not violate the basic assumptions and values that make up the identity of this module. In particular, the module is based on the following assumptions:

- Myths construct our reality, establishing a particular distribution of influence and power in our society;
- Myths help society, to a certain extent, to find its bearings. At the same time, if myths are not subject to reflection and critical thinking, they can turn into a tool for manipulation and an obstacle to societal development. This is especially true of public consensuses linked to conflict and societal trauma;
- History is a narrative. To understand and critically evaluate history, we need to know who the narrator is and what his/her vision/position are;
- Critical thinking insures people against manipulation: "Doubt is the mother of wisdom".

Together with the basic assumptions, it is extremely important that the facilitator should share certain values inherent in this module (listed in no particular order): respect for human dignity and human rights; peace; equality of opportunity; transparency; informed and conscious choice; participation; authenticity; respect for differences; and kindness.

This manual was developed within the framework of International Alert's "South Caucasus Mediation and Dialogue Initiative", namely, as part of the component aimed at promoting critical understanding of myths related to the conflicts in the South Caucasus. This project began in 2009 and consisted of three main strands:

- **THE PAST:** Reflection on civil society peacebuilding and conflict transformation initiatives in the context of the Georgian-Abkhaz, Georgian-Ossetian and Armenian-Azerbaijani conflicts. Civil peacebuilding initiatives mediated by international organisations were analysed and published in the book *Mediation and Dialogue in the South Caucasus: A Reflection on 15 Years of Conflict Transformation Initiatives*.[3]

- **THE PRESENT:** The study of mechanisms through which myths associated with conflicts in the South Caucasus are disseminated: historical narratives; media, including social media; and political speeches. Young journalists, historians, political scientists and sociologists who had studied myths related to the conflicts in the South Caucasus were mobilised to study these mechanisms. The value of this approach lay in the fact that the researchers engaged in a critical analysis of the myths prevalent in their own communities, rather than those on the other side of the conflict divide.

- **THE FUTURE:** To inspire and equip young people in the South Caucasus with a methodology through which to initiate debate in their societies, based on the critical analysis of myths associated with the conflicts and an analysis of how myths and associated "enemy images" and imaged of "victim" are instrumentalised in the domestic politics.

We hope that this module will provide methodological support for those who work in this sensitive, complex but important field.

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3   International Alert (2012). *Mediation and Dialogue in the South Caucasus: A Reflection on 15 Years of Conflict Transformation Initiatives.* International Alert. Available at http://www.international-alert.org/pt-pt/node/4529

Key

This manual includes a USB card with additional training materials on it. The symbols below indicate where there are additional training materials available.

Handout

PowerPoint presentation

Film

1

THEME ONE:

Myth as a Form of Social Consensus

THEME ONE: MYTH AS A FORM OF SOCIAL CONSENSUS

Goal:

To get an understanding of myth as a form of social consensus and its role in public life.

Objectives:

- To grasp the concept of social consensus and its impact on society and the individual;
- To develop an understanding of modern myth creation: myth as social consensus;
- To recognise potential societal implications of social consensus;
- To get an understanding of the socio-psychological mechanisms of social consensus;
- To reflect upon an individual's attitude to social consensus and upon personal ethical choices;
- The facilitating and the constraining roles of myths;
- The risk of manipulation and utilisation of social consensus in socio-political processes.

Sub-themes:

- What is social consensus?;
- The phenomenon of conformism;
- What is a narrative (as a format for conveying social myths) and selectivity;
- Stages and types of societal development and social consensus;
- Stages of moral development according to Kohlberg, and social consensus;
- Kant's categorical imperative;
- Civil society's conventional and post conventional choices.

1. Exercise: Brainstorm on the myth of "Coco Chanel"   10 mins

Aim: To help participants to get a grasp of myth as a form of social consensus and of narratives as a format for transmitting myths, as well as the selectivity of narratives.

Insights: What we believe to be true is often the product of social consensus, i.e. the conscious or subconscious opinion that is shared, to some extent, by members of society. Myths are a form of social consensus. Myths are passed on through narratives. Narratives are selective.

Materials: A flipchart, markers, handouts containing little-known facts about Coco Chanel *(see Handout 1).*

Instructions: Write the words "COCO CHANEL" on the flipchart and ask the group what associations they have with the name. Participants volunteer their associations with the name of Coco Chanel, which are then all written down on the flipchart. Most of the associations have something to do with beauty, the fashion world, etc. The facilitator asks whether there are participants in the group who know any negative facts about Coco Chanel. If there are, the facilitator asks why they have not spoken. If this happened because they followed the example of the rest of the group (the mainstream), the facilitator should explain the phenomenon of conformism. The facilitator then asks the group if they know that Coco Chanel was an anti-Semite and a Nazi collaborator. The facilitator should refer to the facts in the handouts with Coco Chanel's biography.

2. Mini-lecture: Social consensus, narratives, selectivity of narratives and over-generalisations   20 mins

Material: *PowerPoint presentation 1.1 "Subjective realities" on psychological mechanisms of selecting information (Generalisations, Omissions, Distortions).*

Lecture content:

Social consensus implies a spoken or unspoken agreement in society regarding a particular issue, opinion or idea, etc. Social consensus will have a major impact on society: for example, the view that the Earth was the centre of our Universe, prevalent in medieval Europe, resulted in 1600 in Giordano Bruno's execution for his claims, based on the works of Copernicus, that the Sun, and not the Earth, was at the centre of the Universe. With time, however, social consensus on what constituted the centre of our Universe had changed, and, 300 years after Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake, his statue was erected in the Campo dei Fiori in Rome, on the very spot where he was burned as a heretic. Indeed, Giordano Bruno fell victim to social consensus in the Middle Ages and became its hero 300 years later. If we try to analyse the situation more profoundly, it becomes clear that the myth of heresy and related executions that ruined the lives of so many people actually helped a relatively small religious elite and associated grandees of the Middle Ages to preserve their grip on power based on the specific ideology that they perpetuated. From this perspective, the situation is similar to the one described by Umberto Eco in his famous novel *The Name of the Rose*.

This story is a clear illustration of what we call a "myth" in this manual, i.e. a view, an idea, an opinion shared by members of society or a community, or a group of people, which they may consider to be the absolute truth and which helps to perpetuate a certain distribution of power in society. In our understanding of myths, we rely on the writings of 20th-century French philosopher Roland Barthes, according to whom myth is a particular system of communication, *a metalanguage (super-language, a language about language), which transmits the message, which itself is a set of meanings, creating a hidden ideological discourse; on the one hand, myths try to change reality in such a way as to match the values of the myth-creating consciousness; on the other hand, they try to conceal their ideological nature and are perceived by individuals as a matter of course, as the natural state of affairs. Myths, then, are not a relic of the archaic consciousness, but a huge part of modern culture which is realised through advertising, media, movies and other narratives.*[1] As clearly shown by the story of Giordano Bruno, adduced earlier, the "truth" proposed by a myth is a concept that changes according to the period, circumstances, era, new distribution of power in society, newly acquired knowledge, newly discovered facts, etc.

Social consensus is conveyed through narratives – conveying information through different channels (storytelling or chronicles, as was the case in ancient times; books, media, storytelling again, social media – as is the case today). A narrative, on the one hand, is created as a result of the presence of myths and reflects their essence; on the other hand, the narrative itself creates or strengthens myths through an unconscious or deliberate selection of information. For example, the Coco Chanel exercise clearly demonstrated that the image of Coco Chanel as a fashion diva was so dominant in terms

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1   "Myth Today" from "Mythologies" by Roland Barthes [translated by Annette Lavers, Hill and Wang, New York, 1984]. Available on-line at http://www.turksheadreview.com/library/barthes-mythtoday.pdf

of the social consensus regarding her person that the narrative about her had actually omitted the fact of her collaboration with the Nazis, though Coco Chanel herself did not particularly try to conceal that detail of her biography. In the appendix (handouts), you will find two narratives about Coco Chanel – polar interpretations of the same facts in her life. This handout will help you to understand the importance of narratives in the formation of social myths (in our case, that of Coco Chanel).

Myths as views, opinions and assumptions shared by the public support the current distribution of power in society. Myths help society as a whole and its individual members to navigate their environment, to organise and to go about their business. On the other hand, social consensus can be a restricting factor. It can result in a strong pressure on society exerted by the ruling elite, as well as a pressure by society on a particular individual whose opinion differs from that of the majority. Here I would like to recall, once again, Giordano Bruno, who sacrificed his life but did not abandon his principles and opinions: on hearing his court sentence he uttered these famous words: "To burn does not mean to refute!"

In our time when – unlike the Middle Ages – we appreciate the value of critical thinking, it is important to critically rethink the existing consensuses, to question their relevance, to wonder whether they are delaying the development of society or have become an instrument of manipulation in the hands of certain public entities.

It is important to understand the traps that myths as a type of social consensus can contain. Social consensus involves certain psychological processes: generalisation, omission and distortion.[2] If a generalisation that creates a myth is reasonable, it serves as a landmark for an individual. If it is excessive, it truncates their choice and acts as a hindrance in their life. Take, for example, a person who has touched a hot iron and been burnt. If he makes a generalisation on the basis of this experience that "hot items burn", it helps him to navigate through life and to avoid such injuries in the future. But if he makes an overgeneralisation: "an iron is a dangerous object", then he will have to spend the rest of his life wearing crumpled clothes. Such a generalisation has simply taken away his ability to use an iron.

Overly generalised myths do not allow us to see alternatives and thus rob us of the right to choose. There are methods and techniques for the development of critical thinking skills, which help us to overcome excessive generalisation. To learn about them you can use our slide presentation *(see PowerPoint presentation 1.1 "Subjective Realities").*

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2   John Grinder and Richard Bandler (1997). Op cit.

3. Exercise: Our social consensuses: Understanding myths in our societies
30 mins

Aim: To get an understanding of one's society from the point of view of existing social consensuses which influence it.

Materials: Flipcharts, markers for several small groups.

Insights: Analysis of a number of social beliefs as objects of social consensus.

Instructions: The group is divided into smaller groups (no more than five and no less than three people in each group). The most important examples of social consensus are then discussed and prioritised by the groups in order of their importance and prevalence. Each group uses a flipchart to present a pie-chart, showing the scale of societal coverage of one or another consensus.

4. Exercise: The facilitating and constraining roles of myths
20 mins

Aim: To understand the pros and cons of myth's influence on society.

Insights: Myths can orientate and consolidate society; they can create a sense of security and fulfil other positive functions. Myths can also limit the opportunities for informed choices and can create fertile ground for the manipulation of social trauma and images that have a special significance in society, especially, in situations of conflict.

Materials: Two sheets of A4 paper, pinned up in different parts of the room. One contains the sentence: "Myth helping in public life", the other – "Myths interfering with public life".

Instructions: Participants are divided into two groups according to their convictions. You can also have the third, "neutral" group, located in between the two extreme groups. The facilitator asks each group to adduce arguments in favour of their choice.

Facilitator's summary: Once all members have spoken, the facilitator will summarise the helpful and hindering functions of myths, paying attention to the aspects which include risk factors regarding a potential escalation of conflict.

5. Mini-lecture: Civil society: Conventional and post-conventional activities   15 mins

Aim: To develop awareness of civil society's role in relation to social consensuses.

Materials: *PowerPoint presentation 1.2* on: Kohlberg's stages of moral development; Kant's categorical imperative – individual choice versus public choice.

Lecture content:

Lawrence Kohlberg described stages in the development of moral judgement, focusing in particular on the role of social consensus (Kohlberg, 1976). According to Kohlberg, an individual goes through the following moral stages in the course of his/her development:

Preconventional stage, when an individual does not understand such conventional notions as the law, generally accepted norms, etc. At this stage, moral behaviour is motivated by either reward or punishment. Kohlberg divides this stage into two steps:

1.1 A person behaves morally, because he/she believes that this is the only way to escape punishment;
1.2 A person behaves morally, because he/she wants to receive an award.

These modes of moral judgement and conduct are inherent in childhood, but they may well be found among adults and more broadly in society as a whole.

Conventional stage when a person focuses exclusively on social consensus of a certain scale:

2.1 He/she assesses his/her own behaviour from the point of view of moral principles shared by his/her reference group. This mode of moral judgement is typical of adolescents but can also be found among adults, especially among certain groups outside the law (for example, criminal gangs);
2.2 An individual behaves in a law-abiding fashion. Such mode of moral judgement is characteristic of adult law-abiding citizens.

Post-conventional stage, where people are looking for their own moral starting point based on the understanding of the relativity of social consensus and on universal values:

3.1 At this stage, a person realises that the world is diverse and that social consensuses are relative. He/she seeks a reference group whose consensus he/she shares and sees them as a social contract that he/she must fulfil, until he/she changes his/her mind for some reason;
3.2 Here an individual considers social consensuses around him/her through the prism of human values. If he/she considers a social situation/consensus unfair, he/she tries to change it. Here one might argue that this could encourage anti-social behaviour.

Kohlberg, who shared Kant's idea of ethics, referred to Kant's categorical imperative:

"Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law"; "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end"; one "must so act as if he were through his maxim always a legislating member in the universal kingdom of ends".[3]

6. Brainstorm: Civil society diagnostics   15 mins

The facilitator can conclude the mini-lecture by putting the following questions to the audience:

- According to what mode of moral judgement does your society operate?
- What should it be according to Kohlberg's classification?

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3   Kant, Immanuel (1785) Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals [Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten], 3rd ed. Hackett. p. 30.

Glossary

Discourse: A particular way of structuring and using language, a method of linguistic organisation of social reality and, ultimately, an integral part of that reality.

Implication: Something that implies an event, or an approach.

Distortion: A universal cognitive mechanism that distorts reality in the course of its perception; for example, when reading a text, where certain letters are missing from the words we fill them in, "seeing" them as a result of distorting them or having a specific intention. For example, we are sure that our acquaintance N is not in this room. On entering the room, we are more likely not to notice him because our expectations and our attitudes make our perception selective. Distortion is one of the mechanisms of selective perception. Our definition of "distortion" is based on Noam Chomsky's definition.[4]

Kant's categorical imperative: The notion of categorical imperative was formulated by Kant in his work *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), as part of his concept of autonomous ethics, maintaining the idea of the unity of moral principles and their independence from the surrounding world. A categorical imperative is articulated through three formulations.

Conformism: A tendency to come under the influence of one's environment, i.e. a person's changing of his attitudes, opinions, perception, behaviour and so on, in line with those prevailing in a particular society or group. There are internal and external conformisms. An internal conformism implies a review of one's attitudes, etc.; an external conformism implies individual behaviour that demonstrates prevailing norms while internally the same individual holds a different view (which he/she does not dare to voice).

Conventional: Standard.

Myth: A special communication system, a metalanguage (a language about language), which conveys a message, which is a set of meanings that create a hidden ideological discourse. On the one hand, myth attempts to change the situation so that it matches the values of the myth-creating consciousness; on the other hand, it attempts to hide its ideological nature and is taken for granted, as a natural state of affairs. Myth, then, is not a relic of the archaic consciousness, but a huge part of modern culture, which is realised through advertising, media, movies and other narratives. In our definition of myth, we follow Roland Barthes (see Recommended reading).

Narrative: Any method of narration or storytelling (written, visual, verbal), interpretation of certain knowledge, which includes the position of interpreter him/herself.

Generalisation: Occurs when a person or a group of people come to further-reaching conclusions on the basis of specific experience (for example, having been scared by an individual vicious dog, a person concludes that all dogs are vicious). Excessive generalisations reduce one's potential to choose. In the case of the dog, if the person who has made such a generalisation sees any dog, he/she will run away from it.

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4   John Grinder and Richard Bandler (1997). *The Structure of Magic*. Science and Behavior Books.

Social consensus: Transparent or unspoken, articulated or non-articulated, conscious or subconscious consensus in society regarding a fact, an event, its assessment, etc.; includes basic assumptions by society.

Selectivity of perception: The selectivity of our perception, which is shaped by our expectations, attitudes, stereotypes, prejudices, etc.

Omission: Mechanism that ensures the selectivity of perception. If we go back to the example of generalisation that occurred as a result of a bad experience with a vicious dog, it can be assumed that the person who believes all dogs to be vicious would not notice a friendly dog's tail wagging in a sign of welcome. He/she would simply not see it, i.e. would omit it.

Recommended reading

J. Javakhishvili and L. Kvarchelia (Eds.) (2013). *Myths and Conflict. Instrumentalisation of Conflict in Political Discourse*. London: International Alert. Available at http://www.international-alert.org/resources/publications/myths-and-conflict-south-caucasus-vol-2-english

R. Barthes. "Myth Today" from "Mythologies" by Roland Barthes [translated by Annette Lavers, Hill and Wang, New York, 1984]. Available at http://www.turksheadreview.com/library/barthes-mythtoday.pdf

J. Grinder and R. Bandler (1989). *The Structure of Magic*. Science and Behavior Books.

L. Kohlberg (1976). 'Moral stages and moralization: The cognitive-developmental approach'. In T. Lickona (Ed.) *Moral Development and Behavior: Theory, Research, and Social Issues*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. pp.31–53.

B. Munsey (Ed.) (1980). *Moral Development, Moral Education and Kohlberg*. Religious Education Press.

V. Volkan (1997). *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*. Farrar, Straus Giroux & Inc.

THEME TWO:
Societal Trauma and Conflict

THEME TWO: SOCIETAL TRAUMA AND CONFLICT

Goal:

To understand the phenomena of societal consciousness and the unconscious, associated with societal trauma resulting from armed conflict; to reflect upon these phenomena's impact on public life.

Objectives:

- To raise awareness about the linkages between societal trauma, its root causes, its influence on public life etc.;
- To raise awareness of the psychological phenomena that fuel societal trauma resulting from armed conflicts, including the phenomena of "Learned Helplessness" and "Victimhood" and "Enemy Images";
- To understand psychological defence mechanisms associated with "Enemy Images" and other phenomena inherent in societal trauma: projection, introjection, causal attribution.

Main topics:

- Public trauma, social trauma, societal trauma;
- Learned Helplessness;
- Victimhood;
- Enemy Image;
- Bermuda Triangle Relations;
- Identity;
- Dehumanisation;
- Causal attribution;
- Projection.

Insights:

An understanding of the relative benefits of "Enemy Images" in strengthening group identity; to recall the phenomena of projection and introjection using participants' own experience; to reflect upon causal attribution and cognitive dissonance as internal psychological mechanisms to maintain a positive and consistent identity; to understand basic psychological illusions and their impact.

Methodological toolbox:

Comment: There are four PowerPoint presentations for this topic in the "toolbox"; the facilitator may decide which of them to use during the training. The facilitator may also develop his/her own version of the PowerPoint presentations, based on the session's materials.

2.1 Transfer of Chosen Trauma
2.2 Bermuda Triangle
2.3 Basic Illusions
2.4 Escalation of Conflict

1. Exercise: Attention! Political leaders are speaking   30 mins

Aim: To demonstrate how Enemy Images are used in politics.

Insights: To help the participants understand what images can be manipulated by politicians and for what purposes.

Materials: Short film clips of speeches by the following political leaders: Fidel Castro, Nikita Khrushchev, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Vladimir Putin and Hugo Chavez (see USB: the facilitator can make a different compilation of their speeches, bearing in mind that the clips should illustrate manipulation of an Enemy Image); three computers and a slide-projector, notepads and pens for each participant to make notes.

Instructions: Ask the participants to split into small groups to view video clips of the speeches made by political leaders and note down the following:

- What they are talking about;
- What explicit and implicit promises are contained in the speeches;
- What rhetorical and linguistic speech techniques they employ (generalisation, distortion, etc.).

Plan: Divide the participants into several small groups, and organise a viewing by each group of one of the political leaders' addresses. Participants can view the clip several times. After that, they discuss the speech according to the questions in the instructions above. After the group discussions, small groups make presentations at the plenary session followed by a general discussion.

Tips for the facilitator: During the discussion, one should note to whom the political leaders address their speeches, what images they use and what they urge their respective audiences to do.

2. Interactive lecture: Societal trauma and conflict   30 mins

The lecture will focus on societal trauma as a starting point for the discussion of manipulation and the use of "Enemy" and "Victim" images; PowerPoint presentation 2.1 "Transfer of Chosen Trauma" (based on a case from the former Yugoslavia) will also be used. The lecture also contains the "Bermuda Triangle" diagram (PowerPoint presentation 2.2) to show the stalemate nature of the interaction in the "Victim-Aggressor-Saviour" format. The Enemy Image phenomenon as the final point in the escalation of a conflict will be discussed (PowerPoint presentation 2.4), as well as the dehumanisation process associated with the creation/emergence of the Enemy Image.

Lecture content:
We recommend to begin with *PowerPoint presentation 2.1 "Transfer of Chosen Trauma"*:

> In 1389, the Ottoman army embarked on a military operation to seize Serbia. The battle on the Kosovo Field on St Vitus Day (Vidovan) was to be the decisive confrontation of the two sides. The Serbian army was led by the military commander Lazarus, while Sultan Murad commanded the Ottoman army. On the eve of the battle, some troops of the Serbian army managed to sneak into the Ottoman camp and kill Sultan Murad. Despite that fact, the Ottomans attacked on 28 June, the commander of the Serbian army Lazarus was killed in the ensuing fighting and the Serbs lost the battle. This resulted in the 500 years of the Ottoman yoke for the Serbs, with associated humiliation and oppression. The situation gave rise to the development of a societal trauma, one of the most powerful symbols of which was the army commander Lazarus, sanctified in the 16th century. In the 20th century, against the backdrop of the collapse of the Soviet camp, on the wave of "identity wars" in 1989 (the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo), Slobodan Milosevic was elected President of the Republic. The themes of the Battle of Kosovo and Lazarus's death were used widely by Milosevic for his political PR. A requiem service was held for the hallows of St Lazarus in Sirmium, Bosnia, Serbia and on the day of the battle itself the hallows were confined in the ancient Gracanica monastery in Kosovo. At the large gathering to mark this event, the participants' T-shirts sported the words that the commander Lazarus had used to rally his army when calling them to battle against the infidels. That battle cry from the 14th century regained its relevance six centuries later, on the eve of the bloody massacres of the late 20th century, against the background of the societal trauma, in the situation created by a destructive political leader.

Advice to the facilitator: We recommend that, in order to ensure some interactive methodology, following the presentation, you should encourage a brief discussion of the case, focusing the group's attention on the subject of the political manipulation of societal trauma and Enemy Images.

After a brief discussion, the facilitator provides greater detail on social/societal trauma (see following page).

In psycho traumatology, the term "**social trauma**" refers to the trauma that occurred in some segment of society (for example, a ship sinks and a certain segment of society, i.e. relatives of the deceased, are traumatised by it), while the "**societal trauma**" refers to the trauma experienced by society as a whole, in all its segments. This happens in disasters – natural (e.g. an earthquake or a tsunami), or anthropogenic (for example, an armed conflict or terrorist attack).

In this session, we will discuss **societal trauma**. Societal trauma disrupts the basic human illusions *(see also PowerPoint presentation 2.3 "Basic Illusions")*:

• The illusion of a just world order;
• The illusion of one's own invulnerability/one's immortality;
• The illusion of events' and one's own life's predictability;
• The illusion of one's control over life.

These are replaced with the opposite assumptions that violate individuals' adaptation to their environment: the world is unfair and chaotic; I'm helpless; life is unpredictable and ungovernable; I am mortal; and, moreover, quoting from Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita*: '[I] am suddenly mortal'.

Such basic assumptions dramatically alter individual/societal perception of the world and form the basis for the development of the victimhood phenomenon ("I am a victim"). This problematic condition can further develop into "Learned Helplessness" when an individual/society, despite the post-trauma change in the circumstances and the appearance of new opportunities, remains passive, feeling helpless and unable to bear the burden of responsibility for his/her own life.

If we are dealing with a manmade disaster, for example, an armed conflict, the perception of oneself as a victim implies the presence of an enemy, giving rise to another very important psychological phenomenon – the "Enemy Image".

On the one hand, an "Enemy Image" may be a consequence of the armed conflict; on the other hand, its cause. Often, if a feud lasts for years, the Enemy Image and the perception of oneself as a victim are passed from generation to generation. The younger generation, in a way, "inherits" the Enemy Image from the older generation through family and social narratives.

If there exists an Enemy Image and a sense of Victimhood, society often seeks a "Saviour", a kind of Messiah to magically settle the situation. Psychiatrist Stephen Karpman (1968) called this situation the "Drama Triangle", while Eric Berne (1975) referred to it as the "Bermuda Triangle". The Victim attributes all his/her problems to the Enemy and does not take responsibility for his/her condition; he/she shifts the responsibility on to the Saviour. The Saviour helps to maintain the feeling of helplessness in the Victim and thus asserts him/herself or fulfils his/her other needs, so that, in fact, he/she has no interest in the Victim's self-sufficiency and does not contribute to it.

Having entered into these ("Bermuda") relations, it is rather easy to move from one end (for example, the image of the Victim) to another (the Aggressor), etc. In fact, a vicious circle of perverse relationships emerges, which Berne called the Bermuda Triangle.

> **An example of a "Bermuda" relationship from prison life**
>
> In a prison (in a country/city which shall not be named), some prisoners bullied other quiet, peaceful and obedient inmates. To save the latter from their bullies, a separate wing was built specially for them. As soon as they were transferred to the new building, the prisoners once again divided into Aggressors and Victims and started to treat each other in the same way as before. Only now it was the former Victims who took the role of the Aggressors. There are many real-life examples of "migration" from one tip of the Bermuda triangle to another – can you recall any such examples? [The facilitator asks the group]

The Bermuda relationships are clearly disruptive. To resolve the situation, you have to get out of the triangle. This can be done by thinking of yourself not as a Victim, but as an Escapee: in English, the difference becomes apparent through the comparison of the terms Survivor and Victim.

What is understood by Enemy Image? It is a generalised ("They're all ..."), negative ("They're all Bad ..."), dehumanised ("They're all Bad, Non-humans ...") image of a party to the conflict.

Dehumanisation can get to the point when one party starts calling the other various insect names and actually perceives them as insects. This is typical of situations leading to armed conflicts, ethnic cleansing or genocide. For example, in 1994, on the eve of the genocide of ethnic Tutsis in Rwanda, their representatives became known as "cockroaches". And to "crush" cockroaches is normal. Dehumanisation removes the cognitive dissonance (with the "thou shalt not kill" principle) and, in fact, makes killing "the norm".

Cognitive dissonance is a psychological mechanism which plays an important part in human life. In particular, according to the theory of cognitive dissonance,[1] when there are two opposites of knowledge or attitudes, or a mismatch of attitudes and behaviour, a person feels a discomfort (cognitive dissonance), which he/she overcomes by modifying either his/her attitude or his/her behaviour. For example, if a person and/or society share the attitude of "thou shalt not kill", the desire to destroy the enemy leads to a cognitive dissonance. Dehumanisation of the enemy removes such dissonance. There is another illustration of the cognitive dissonance's influence on the Enemy Image: if, for whatever reason, the dynamics of escalation has reached the level of violent conflict, once the violence occurred the parties de facto amnesize all positive moments from the history of their relations. The violent behaviour which has taken place enters into a cognitive dissonance with the positive perception of the other side and then this perception or attitude changes to a negative one. The new, positive information, which dissonates with the accepted attitude, is not perceived – perception becomes selective and, in its turn, fuels the Enemy Image.

Using the example of the dynamics of change in the focus of the parties to a conflict one can reflect upon the dynamics of the actualisation of the Enemy Image: a conflict begins with a disagreement about the distribution of a real or symbolic resource between the parties; the resource is the satisfaction of basic human needs (such as existence, security, identity, knowledge, creativity, recreation, social involvement). Confrontation in essence

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1   L. Festinger (1957). *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

starts with a necessity to satisfy this need and the drive for it. At the initial stage of the conflict, the purpose of the parties' actions is meeting the need. At the next stage, the purpose is to prove who is right; already at this stage, the need and its satisfaction are beginning to be pushed aside. Then the actions are shaped by a desire to get the better of the opponent – with the original need being pushed back even further. During the violent stage of the conflict, the satisfaction of the need is forgotten, the parties perceive each other as enemies and destruction of the other becomes the main purpose of their actions. The Enemy Image plays a decisive role in unleashing the war.

A variety of psychological phenomena closely linked to the need for identity play an important part in creating an Enemy Image, in addition to the cognitive dissonance. We will cover some of them below.

3. Exercise: Who am I? Who are we? Who are they?   15 mins

Purpose: Teaser for the identity theme, reflection on the phenomenon of identity.

Materials: Small slips of paper, enough for everyone.

Plan:

- **Step 1:** Give each participant a piece of paper containing pronouns:
  I
  We
  They

- **Step 2:** Ask the participants to write down three associations for each pronoun, avoiding the use of definitions and epithets (preferably only use nouns).
- **Step 3:** The participants will read out (optional) the list of all their identities or just some of them. This is followed by a discussion about what the exercise has taught them.

Insights: It is important that the participants should become aware of different parts of their identity, and priority identities, and consider their significance including group discussion on how identity is formed.

4. Mini-lecture: Identity, enemy images and underpinning psychological mechanisms: Projection, introjection, cognitive dissonance, causal attributions   15 mins

Tips for the facilitator: One should try to get the participants to recall the impact of the psychological phenomena described based on their own experience, in other words, make the lecture interactive.

Lecture content:

Identity is a basic psychological need to be yourself and identical with yourself; it is our feeling of being ourselves, which gives a person, a group or society a sense of themselves etc. We are born with certain makings of identity; our identity is developed together as we grow up, depending on the social context which we inhabit. The main human issue is the issue of identity: who I am and what I live for. Society also has an identity, and it is not a simple aggregate of identities of its members; society's identity is shaped by answering the same questions: who we are, what we are, what our mission is.

Identity has a tendency to feel positive. Yet both people and societies have traits that they find unacceptable. This causes stress. To reduce stress, our psyche usually resorts to psychological protection: the functioning of unconscious psychological mechanisms aimed at minimising unpleasant inner experiences. For example, a defence mechanism called **projection** allows a person/society to ignore the traits that they find unacceptable. In the case of projection, such traits are "taken outside oneself" and "projected" on to the other. We come across examples of projection on a daily basis: for example, a person who is hungry sees the people around him as also hungry; a stingy man who does not recognise the presence of this trait in himself and does not accept it projects it on to others and complains, "What stingy neighbours we have!" An old woman, who finds her own sexual impulses unacceptable, scolds young girls: "Just look at them! All dolled up, spoiled hussies!" Can you adduce your own examples? [The facilitator addresses the group and asks them to recall their experiences of projection, as well as the opposite of projection – the mechanism of **introjection** (see Glossary).]

Societies have the same tendency to project on to others their own unacceptable qualities. In the case of a party to the conflict, this provides an ideal opportunity for such a projection: society sees all of its own negative qualities in the enemy. Can you adduce your own examples? [The facilitator addresses the group]

Causal attribution is another interesting psychological mechanism closely associated with the perception of Enemy Images. To what do we ascribe the causes and motives of actions? For example, a person fails an exam – would he deduce from it that he's stupid? Most likely he'd say that he got a bad question, or that the examiner was too strict. What if his fellow student, who he does not know very well, also fails? It is quite likely that he would think the student lazy or stupid. Can you think of examples from your own experience? [The facilitator addresses the group]

Causal attribution is particularly relevant when there is a deficit of information – when there is no information available, we interpret, fantasise, project, etc. In conflicts where communication has been disrupted, the parties usually have limited knowledge about each other, and causal attribution plays an important role in perpetuating the Enemy Image.

The classic exponent of the attribution theory psychologist Harold Kelley identified three types of attribution:

- Personal attribution when you see the motivation or the reason in another person's trait or characteristic ("They behave so badly towards us because they're bad");
- Object/subject attribution ("They behave so well towards us because we are good") when the other side's behaviour is explained by the subject or the object for whom/which the action is carried out;
- Circumstantial attribution ("I am behaving so badly because it would be impossible to do anything else in the given circumstances").

Such psychological mechanisms as causal attribution, projection, etc. make our perception selective and subjective, especially in a conflict where emotional background is full of tension and has a huge importance. It is therefore useful to remember them and keep them in mind when analysing conflict relations.

Glossary

Social trauma: A problematic psycho-social condition of a particular segment of society caused by a potentially traumatic event: an accident, a smaller-scale disaster, etc.

Societal trauma: This implies that the entire society, without exception, has been traumatised – all strata and all generations, due to both natural disasters, such as earthquakes, and manmade disasters, such as wars or repressions by a political regime. Societal trauma affects and destroys social mechanisms that enable us to cope with trauma, and tends to be passed down from generation to generation.

Learned Helplessness: A condition into which a person, a social group or whole society that have experienced violence and/or trauma sink, expressed in the fact that a subject considers him/herself unable to control his/her lives and solve problems; he/she tries to shift the responsibility for his/her condition either on to the "Enemy" ("It's his fault that I find myself in this state") or the "Saviour" ("I can't help myself but will be saved by this or that person").

Victimhood: This implies that an individual, family, community or society consider themselves to be victims of certain circumstances that persecute and threaten their livelihood. Both events and concrete people could be construed as such circumstances.

Enemy Image: An overgeneralised and dehumanised image of the "other"; the phenomenon is typical of a high level of conflict escalation and, in fact, serves as a harbinger of violent confrontation, ethnic cleansing and/or genocide.

Karpman's Drama Triangle (Eric Berne's Bermuda Triangle): This metaphor describes a vicious circle/stereotype of the Victim-Aggressor-Saviour relationship: all three roles as complementary, locked in a joint psychological game and perverse interactions, and are thus mutually dependent.

Cognitive dissonance: Having two contradictory (mutually exclusive) pieces of knowledge, beliefs and attitudes in human consciousness leads to cognitive dissonance and discomfort. People tend to remove cognitive dissonance. If there is a contradiction between what a person knows and what he/she does, he/she sinks into a cognitive dissonance and tries to relieve it in three possible ways: change his/her convictions according to his/her behaviour; change the behaviour to match his/her convictions; or treat information selectively (recall the mechanisms of "omission" and "distortion" described in the first part of the module).

Identity: A basic need of a person, social group or society to be identical with oneself.

Dehumanisation: Objectification of a living thing, treating a subject as an object.

Causal attributions: Against the background of information deficit in a particular interaction, a person or a group of people are credited with the causes and the motives of their own and other person/people's behaviour.

Mechanisms of psychological protection: Extramental mechanisms in our psyche intended to reduce stress caused by an internal or an external stressor. An external stressor can mean any external event that prevents the fulfilment of basic human needs. This is when the

rationalisation mechanism is activated to enable us to re-evaluate an event (for example, "The grapes are too green", as goes the famous Krylov fable). Thoughts, attitudes and feelings that a person finds unacceptable in him/herself could act as internal stressors. In such cases, a defence mechanism is activated to exteriorise them (see "Projection" below).

Projection: A psychological defence mechanism that allows a person to ascribe to others the thoughts, the feelings and the moods he/she finds unacceptable in him/herself. The following example is one of the classical metaphors of projection: a man sits in a house with mirrors instead of windows; he looks in the mirror and thinks that he sees the world outside when, in fact, all he sees is himself.

Introjection: A defence mechanism, the opposite of projection – when a person absorbs ideas, attitudes and opinions of others (around him/her) and considers them his/her own.

Recommended reading

E. Berne (1964). *Games People Play: The Psychology of Human Relationships*. New York: Grove Press.

E. Berne (1972). *What Do You Say After You Say ello? The Psychology of Human Destiny*. New York: Grove Press.

Sarjveladze, N, Beberashvili, Z., Javakhishvili, J., Makhashvili, N., Sarjveladze, Na. (2000). *Trauma and Psychological Help*. Baku: Tu-Tu Publishers.

M.E.P. Seligman (1991). *Learned Optimism. How to Change Your Mind and Your Life*. New York: Pocket Books, Simon and Shooster.

L. Festinger (1957). *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

V.D. Volkan (1997). *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

V.D. Volkan (2004). 'Chosen Trauma, the Political Ideology of Entitlement and Violence'. Berlin meeting. Available at http://www.vamikvolkan.com/Chosen-Trauma,-the-Political-Ideology-of-Entitlement-and-Violence.php

S.B. Karpman (1968). 'Fairy Tales and Script Drama Analysis', *Transactional Analysis Bulletin*, Vol. 7, No. 26, April. Available at http://www.karpmandramatriangle.com/pdf/DramaTriangle.pdf

S.B. Karpman (2007). 'The New Drama Triangles', USATAA/ITAA Conference lecture, 11th August. Available at http://www.karpmandramatriangle.com/pdf/thenewdramatriangles.pdf

3

THEME THREE:

Heroes, Anti-heroes, History Textbooks and Narratives

THEME THREE: HEROES, ANTI-HEROES, HISTORY TEXTBOOKS AND NARRATIVES

Goal:

To understand the phenomenon of "narrative" and its influence on the development of public opinion.

Objectives:

- To understand the potential for manipulation of images of "heroes" and "anti-heroes";
- To reflect upon historical narratives as a mechanism for the creation, dissemination and transmission of myths;
- To consider the role of history textbooks as one of the channels through which to transmit narratives.

Sub-themes:

- Hero and anti-hero;
- Glorification;
- Narrative, narrator and selectivity of narratives;
- Political manipulation;
- Transfer of narratives from generation to generation;
- History textbooks as a narrative.

Methodology tips:

Below are some exercises and mini-lectures as well as PowerPoint presentations on the theme. It should be noted that we welcome the facilitators' own selection of content-rich texts for the exercise "Create a hero". The excerpts provided for the analysis ("analytical tests") can be used as they are, with no changes, or they can be treated as sample excerpts. In the latter case, the facilitators may select some texts from textbooks for the purpose of this exercise, based on where this training is taking place/country of target group.

3.1 Hero and Heroisation
3.2 History and Narratives
3.3 Traditional, Modern, Post-modern

1. Exercise: Create a hero   30 mins

Aim: To demonstrate to the participants by using a specific example how selectivity of historical facts, their descriptions and interpretations influence choices and decisions made by groups of people and by society in general.

Insights: A participant should become aware that it is possible to be deceived not only by lies but also by the intentional concealment or partial disclosure of the truth framed in a particular way. A participant comes to understand the role of a hero in motivating society, the "attraction" of heroism as a socially significant phenomenon for those interested in manipulation; he/she becomes aware of the risk of using heroism as an "absolution" for unconventional behaviour.

Materials: Biographical data about historical figures from general encyclopaedias (the material must be quite substantial so that the players have a choice – 5–7 pages). For example, Hitler, Stalin, Churchill, Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa, Bin Laden (each facilitator is free to introduce his/her own personalities, based on the region where the training takes place).

Plan:

- **Stage 1**. The participants are divided into groups of three. Each group is given a biography. Those with a positive hero biography are asked – using the method of information selection and interpretation – to transform a hero biography into that of an anti-hero. Conversely, those with an anti-hero biography are asked to transform it into a positive hero biography by applying the same mechanism.
- **Stage 2**. Having familiarised themselves with the distributed material, the groups read out (relay) brief (selective) information about their heroes/anti-heroes, without naming them. After that, the other participants must express their attitude to these characters (by taking a vote, for example).
- **Stage 3**. The groups disclose the names of their personalities.

Tips for the facilitator: Make your audience aware that it is possible to present a positive hero as an anti-hero, and vice versa, by selecting your information.

Questions to consider:

- How often, in your opinion, do voters confuse heroes with anti-heroes during elections?
- What could help to prevent such "elections"?
- Can you provide similar examples of "selective" biographies from your region?

2. Interactive lecture: Heroes, narratives, heroism and manipulation   20 mins

Theme: heroes in different times; narratives, including those narratives that create hero and anti-hero images; heroism and manipulation of the hero image

Lecture content:
Also use *PowerPoint 3.1 "Heroes and Heroisation"*

We have to look to antiquity for sources of heroes and heroism. In ancient Greek mythology, heroes/heroines were the sons or daughters of immortal gods and mortal human beings. A hero was associated with courage and military feats, readiness to sacrifice him/herself to gain glory – heroes of antiquity fought monsters and each other. In ancient Greek, the word "hero" means a "valiant man", a "leader", while in Latin it means a "defender". An anti-hero implied an image contrary to that of a hero. Alongside military heroes there existed civilian heroes, embodying various aspects of culture and civilisation: a musician hero (Orpheus), a law-maker hero (Theseus), etc. The hero epoch concluded with two wars (the Seven against Thebes and the Trojan War), in which heroes perished and their "era" thus ended.

The dynamics of developing an understanding of heroes and heroism can be found in philosophy. The German philosopher of the late 18th to early 19th century George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel sees no place for heroes in a civilised world, even if their actions bring about civilisation and the founding of a state, governed by the rule of law; but this is all there is to their mission and their being. In the first half of the 19th century, together with the development of the Romanticism intellectual movement and the European nations' national liberation movements, a new hero image emerged in Europe – that of a rebel and a leader of national liberation movements. Nietzsche saw a hero as an *Ubermensch* who does not accept public norms. In post-modern times, a hero is a strong personality (a sort of an "Ubermensch"), rebelling against and fighting the "Societal machine" – the Matrix, the embodiment of the pressure of social norms, which prevent the individual fulfilment of a person and try to force him/her down the typical path.

The tradition to use "hero" or "anti-hero" images for political purposes goes back to the times of antiquity: in ancient Greece and Rome, grandee politicians widely identified themselves with one hero or another. The purpose was to reap political dividends and manipulate public opinion in the struggle for power. From this perspective, the Soviet experience of using heroes and glorification presents an interesting case. To introduce this theme, a brief description of the heroism traditions in 19th- and 20th-century Russia needs to be considered. During the age of the Romantics in Russia, the hero image came to be associated with the Decembrists,[1] absorbing such features as a heroic deed and the need to sacrifice oneself for the greater good (a sort of "tragic courage"). Contrary to such a hero image, the populist revolutionaries gave rise to a terrorist-hero, who also sacrificed him/herself, but, in doing so, killed those he/she considered enemies. The Bolshevik ideologists criticised the heroism of both the Decembrists and the Populists because of 'their remoteness from the people', and they began to speak of 'the heroism of

1   Representatives of the Russian nobility, fighting against the Tsar and for social justice, organised an uprising at the beginning of the 19th century for which they were exiled to Siberia.

the masses.[2] '*The cause of our victories: ... the ability to elevate the energy, heroism and enthusiasm of the masses, focusing the revolutionary charged efforts on yet another most important goal.*'[3] In fact, for Lenin, the success of the Revolution depended on whether the leaders could inspire representatives of the working class to sacrifice themselves. Following the success of the October Revolution, the Bolshevik leaders continued to rely on the 'heroism of the masses' and 'wrapped everyday working life and daily hardships in heroism', to motivate the population to build a new state in the conditions of extreme poverty and devastation: 'The victory of the Revolution can by no means be ensured by the heroism of a single impetus, it requires a most lengthy, most determined, most difficult heroism of everyday work en masse'.[4]

In the hands of the Communist Party, heroism became a powerful tool to motivate the population to fight and to create: information about mass military heroic deeds was widely circulated (26 Baku commissars, heroes of the Brest Fortress, the Young Guard), as were the great deeds of the working masses – when meeting/exceeding production plans, developing the virgin lands and so on and so forth. All this was based on the propaganda of self-sacrifice for the common good.

In fact, to assist in this very difficult task – the creation of a state in the conditions of the post-Revolution devastation – the Communist Party had two sources of labour force: the millions of people sent to the labour camps where they were forced to work without reward, and "the masses" – i.e. the working class and the peasants, motivated to work for very low pay thanks to the concept of "mass heroism", underpinned, in addition, by individual heroism. Today, for example, it is a well-known fact that A.G. Stakhanov was awarded the Hero of Socialist Labour award,[5] because a group of three people were working under his name, in specially orchestrated conditions. The government needed to create a myth about Stakhanov – to motivate other workers in the country (by creating the so-called "Stakhanov movement"). To that end, they resorted to **Heroisation** – "lionising" a person, a group of people or an event, making them heroic by using a range of techniques and spreading the relevant narratives. In today's world, it is done through a variety of mass media.

In contemporary post-conflict societies, there exists another application of heroism when the people who distinguished themselves during wars can demand a special, privileged legal status, which, in turn, can result in selective justice.

In conclusion, it should be noted that every age has a different perception of heroes and every age has its own heroes. At the same time, every age, starting with ancient Greece, uses heroes and heroism for political or other, mercenary, goals. This does not lessen the significance or value of heroic deeds that were committed for the common good, but it requires a critical appraisal of the use of "heroic deeds" and of the manipulation of heroism.

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2   "The masses" was a dehumanising expression that the Bolshevik leaders employed to denote society, following the teachings of Karl Marx.

3   Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th edition, volume 30, p.118; also volume 31, p.272.

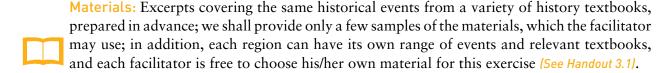4   Ibid, volume 29, p.390; see also volume 31, pp.372–74 and volume 27, pp.359–60.

5   In August 1935, the Soviet media announced that colliery worker Alexander Stakhanov achieved an output of 102 tonnes of coal instead of the usual 7 tonnes in the course of a night shift. Stakhanov was subsequently turned into a Soviet cult "labour hero" and an example to be emulated by everyone.

3. Exercise: Guess who is writing history   30 mins

Aim: To understand the influence/impact of the narrator on the creation of historical narratives.

Insights: To become aware of the fact that the form and content of historical narratives are largely shaped by the author ("narrator"), the source, his/her position and the basic assumptions.

Materials: Excerpts covering the same historical events from a variety of history textbooks, prepared in advance; we shall provide only a few samples of the materials, which the facilitator may use; in addition, each region can have its own range of events and relevant textbooks, and each facilitator is free to choose his/her own material for this exercise *(See Handout 3.1)*.

Plan: To discuss, in small groups of three, several excerpts from a number of history textbooks, covering the same historical events. The groups read and compare excerpts against the following parameters: what and how (linguistically) is relayed; what basic premises can be identified/read "between the lines"; what is the presumed position of the author; and what messages are relayed. The small groups' insights are then discussed in plenary.

Notes to the exercise: All place names, event names, dates, proper names and ethnic details, which can help to discover the name and the date, are either removed from the text or changed.

Main rules of text analysis:

1. First and foremost, one must concentrate on the presented facts and make sure that the facts themselves have not necessarily been falsified. In other words, all historians mention one and the same set of facts, yet they interpret them differently; they either intentionally conceal some facts or put an additional emphasis on other facts.
2. Facts must be distinguished in one's mind from their interpretation and one must realise that a set of facts in itself does not prevent the event from being described or narrated in totally different ways.
3. One must reflect upon and try to imagine different social and political contexts, which give rise to the disparate interpretations of the same events.
4. It is important to remember that we try to compare different versions not simply to prove that some historical events are being falsified. In reality, the problem goes deeper. The issue is not the falsifications (which can also exist) but the construction of ethnic and historical myths and their essentialisation (see further in this text and Glossary) and "**historialisation**" (see Glossary) of historical events.

   We therefore should ask the following key questions about the text:

   • Why do historians interpret the described events in this – and not some other – way?
   • How does the position (personal, political) and the social and political context of the narrator (i.e. the historian) influence/impact his/her interpretation of the same event?
   • The last and the most important question – is it possible for the interpretation of an event to be neutral (devoid of any value judgements, not agenda-driven)?

5. Let us put ourselves in the shoes of the interpreter and let us put forward our own interpretation, devoid of value judgements.
6. Lastly, it is important to remember that we analyse the language of various interpretations – the words textbook authors use, the words we use – in order to put forward a neutral interpretation. What words, phrases and expressions should we avoid? Which turn of phrase can be used and which are best avoided?

4. Interactive lecture: Historical narratives – can history be "objective"? 20 mins

Foundations of a critical approach: History as a result of natural laws of development or history as a narrative?

(Narrative, history textbook and author, history as a science versus history as interpretation of events, modernism and post-modernism in history, textbooks and the power of nomination)

Lecture content:

Also use *PowerPoint presentation 3.2 "Historical Narratives"* and *3.3 "Traditional, Modern, Post-Modern"*

Can we claim that it is possible to have very different approaches to history? Undoubtedly, we can. It may be worthwhile to recall here that the age of modernism, when the first approach to history teaching was developed, has already passed. Now we live in the post-modernist age when we consume much disparate and often contradictory information, and when many meanings of events and things, which had previously been thought of as unshakeable, are becoming less and less distinct. It is the time when the very concept of world order built along the lines of nation states increasingly is being criticised and put in doubt. In this new post-modernist age of the development of historical theories and methodologies, we can rethink previous approaches. The knowledge about the direction taken by this rethinking becomes the basis for the development of the new critical thinking and approaches to understanding the historical narrative. This is what Russian academic Vladimir Malakhov has to say about it:

'We are used to differentiating between history as an "objective reality", as something which happened in reality, and narration about this history as a "historical science". The difficulty however is, that the "reality" and the "narrative" are inseparable from each other. We can only learn of what happened (or did not happen) from the historians, and in no other way. And where do historians get this information if they did not witness those events which occurred (or did not occur) many years ago? Considering that the historic witness accounts which historians use are often unreliable and contradict each other, it becomes clear that there can be no one version of events. In order to build a line of narration, a historian needs a concept – one which comes before he turns to witness accounts. Relying on this concept a historian uses some facts and discards others. It is the only way that he/she can write history. And thus create it.'

We speak of historical events in the sense that these events are created (or constructed) by historians themselves in the process of narration about these events. And here we must clearly understand that no historical event can be perceived in isolation of its

interpretation. In order to better understand what we are going to discuss, an important first step should be made. This step or this first exercise is a self-reflection in relation to the knowledge that determines our perceptions of the history of our people/nation.

So, let us ask ourselves a question: can we consider our history knowledge objective? There can be only one answer – we all attended schools, and many went on to universities afterwards. We learned history as it was taught (represented) in textbooks. At some point, we came to the fair conclusion that Soviet history was "not objective", wrong or even purposefully falsified (with an agenda). Must we think that the post-Soviet version of history can be "objective"? Can we be sure that it is possible to have history without representation? The answer to this key question lies in the perceptions of what "objective knowledge" is and how this type of knowledge is attained or created.

Up to the 19th century, historians narrated all important events as they saw fit. As a rule, all histories were written to justify or glorify kings or emperors. The first attempts to narrate history as a narrative about the peoples were also reduced ultimately to the description of wars, conflicts and periods of rule by the same rulers. It was only in the 19th century that scientists developed a system of universal rules (or laws). At that time, they believed that, by strictly adhering to these developed rules and methodologies, it was possible to obtain positive or "objective" knowledge. That is, the sort of knowledge, which exists independently of perceptions and thoughts of the people obtaining this knowledge. This school of thought came to be called **positivism**. We should understand that the rules, principles and methodologies of obtaining positive or objective knowledge were developed, first of all, for natural sciences and then they were automatically transferred to the historical and social sciences. Ultimately, they started to interpret the laws of human society development by analogy with the laws of nature. While interpreting events in the history of mankind through the prism of such laws, philosophers and historians began to believe that they were, indeed, writing an objective history. It should be remembered that at the time this approach was very productive and forward-thinking. This period offers much interesting and important information, invaluable experience and knowledge, which formed the basis for revisiting all the achievements in historical science and its entire development.

Ultimately, in due course, scientists came to realise that history does not boil down just to the laws of nature. Changes of political regimes, fashions and, most importantly, the accumulated observations and the development of critical approaches all make it possible to create the concept of **narrative**.

With the help of this concept, we indicate that the story and the historic narrative are inextricable from the storyteller, the so-called **narrator**. In the case of our theme, the narrator is the historian him/herself. This story or narrative is inextricably connected to the interpretations with which the historian imbues it, in accordance with his/her perceptions of what is important and what is not, in line with the theoretical paradigm he/she chooses for him/herself, and at worst – when science turns into ideology – in accordance with the political allegiance (agenda) of the historian, as the case may be with any other citizen. That is, one and the same set of facts will always be interpreted differently depending on the position of the narrator. To overcome this contradiction and to prevent a historian turning into an ideologist, the contemporary historic

research must always contain a reflection by the historian, i.e. the description of his/her own position and the reasons behind it, i.e. the reasons he/she adopted this particular position, and not something else.

While questioning the notion of "objectiveness", we must not reduce our notions to the mere idea of purposeful falsification. This is not what we are talking about. To be more precise, this is not all there is to it. Historical events are interpreted differently in different social and political contexts. In addition, we must not treat a history textbook in principle as an attempt to disseminate "objective knowledge". The purpose of a history course and a history textbook is to educate us to become patriots, loyal to a certain political system. In this sense, as historians with an agenda believe, very free interpretations become permissible as does purposeful selection of one type of facts over another, and intentional suppression of the facts that do not fit the accepted scheme for the narrator, etc. Ultimately, historians can purposefully create national myths this way, i.e. construct the images of ideal heroes or "historic enemies", etc.

So, the historic narrative includes the position of historian or narrator. Here it is extremely important to understand that the narrator's position is also inextricably connected to the language he/she speaks. A doctor or a mathematician speaks his/her own professional languages different from other languages. The language of historian also differs from other professional languages. Each professional uses language in accordance with the language structures and those notions and terms which are accepted in a certain professional sphere or science. In order to explain how the way we choose to use language allows us not only to describe but also to create (construct) the world we live in, the notion of **discourse** was invented. That is, a discourse is a way of using language in accordance with certain accepted structures. In this case, we mean **historic discourse**.

In everyday life, we habitually use various notions and perceptions, inserting them into our speech. Such old habitual words and turns of phrase become part of our nature, our identity. It turns out that it is not easy for us to look at these habits of ours from a distance, to try to review critically those phrases and notions we use when discussing important things and events. Or, as philosophers say, it is not easy for us **to reflect** on our thoughts and everyday speech. Such reflection implies that we look at ourselves from a distance. Such reflection is an attempt to think of words we said or our perceptions of events in an abstract manner, as if it were a third party looking at ourselves.

That is, the questions that we should ask of ourselves first of all can be formulated as follows:

How free or even original are we in our expressions and perceptions of the world around us? Are our perceptions of some important political events our own original thoughts and ideas? Are they not imposed on us by our upbringing, our school education, the newspapers we read or the news we watch (see the mechanism of "introjection" in theme 2 "Societal Trauma and Conflict")?

How often is it that our language or, as philosophers or sociologists say, habitual **linguistic clichés** and stereotypes preserved in the language habitually used to describe various events determine our notions of the world around us and the events in this world?

Sigmund Freud claimed his ideas destroyed the last illusions of mankind and that is why he was so disliked by his contemporaries. The first blow to the vanity of man was dealt by Nicholas Copernicus, who shattered the illusion of mankind that our world was the centre of the Universe and proved that the Earth is merely a planet, one of many, which rotates around the Sun. The second blow, according to Freud, came from Giordano Bruno, who questioned our uniqueness and proposed that other worlds populated by other intelligent creatures can exist. What remained for a man to believe in was that he is the master of what is happening in his soul. However, this very last illusion was destroyed by Freud, who suggested that many of our actions are determined by the unconscious part of our psyche.

But did Freud really destroy the last bastion of human self-esteem? According to French philosopher Michel Foucault, Freud himself displayed a certain amount of conceit. Even now, we often think that we say what we think or what we want to say ourselves. However, Foucault proved that even our language, our habitual figures of speech, perceptions that we operate when discussing various events may not be ours. Indeed, ultimately, we did not create the language we speak. To explain this, Foucault introduced the notion of **discourse**.

A discourse is a way of speaking. A representative of each profession can speak his/her own special jargon, and employ special figures of speech or phrases. It can be a medical discourse, political discourse or historical discourse. It is important to understand, however, that a discourse is an integral part of the power. *A discourse shows the relationship of the power*; a discourse itself is formed and dependent on the relationships of power.

Here it may be worthwhile to recall another notion, which was introduced into sociology by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu – *the power of nomination*. In this case, this is the power given to us, for instance, by the professional diploma in a certain sphere. For example, professional and recognised political scientists possess the power to formulate the political discourse, and professional historians possess the power of nomination to formulate the historical discourse. We are inclined to believe what the professionals, i.e. diploma holders, tell us.

Public platforms are naturally important too, from which to expound these discourses. Because of this, we are used to viewing the mass media as one of the institutions of power. Political scientists or historians, addressing us in the papers or on TV, add the power of mass media to the power of nomination. Therefore, they possess the resources not only to formulate discourses but also to disseminate them. Added to that is the fact that everything that professional historians and recognised historians tell or write is often accepted without question. This is especially the case with the school curriculum and school textbooks, which we all use to study history as a compulsory subject in childhood.

Naturally, it would be presumptuous and wrong to have radical doubts about everything political scientists or historians say in post-Soviet countries. However, it makes sense to consider how easy it was for the historians themselves to get rid of the habit of pursuing a certain agenda, be it the agenda of the time or the agenda of the authorities, and to formulate professional knowledge, based on facts, which will not depend on the moods of the times.

Glossary

Glorification: The process of elevating a person or event (justifiably or not) to heroic status. It is often done through a mass publicity campaign (usually in the media). It can pursue various goals, such as creating an example for other citizens (an example of this is the Stakhanov movement).

Discourse: A certain way of structuring and using the language, a way of linguistic organisation of social reality and, ultimately, an integral part of this reality.

Modernisation: The 'transformation [of society] from traditional, agrarian, rural, patriarchal and holistic into modern, industrial or "post-industrial", urban, democratic and individualistic' (Vishnevsky, 1998, page 6).

Nation or national community: An 'imagined political community, it is imagined as something inevitably limited, but at the same time sovereign. It is imagined, because even the members of the smallest nation will never know, meet or even hear about the majority of their fellow nationals, whilst in their minds each of them has an image of their fellowship' (Anderson, 2001, page 6).

Narrative: Any type of narration or storytelling (written, visual, and verbal), interpreting some knowledge, which includes the position of the interpreter him/herself.

Narrator: A storyteller: person/persons behind the narrative, whose language, attitude, basic assumptions and interpretations are reflected in the narrative.

Historicism: The 'conviction that it is possible to understand the present based on the past. It is a belief that the key to the meaning of all current affairs is in history. That, which occurs now, is understood as the deployment of trends, which occurred before' (for more information, see Malakhov, 2005, pages 52–58).

Primordalism: Used to denote an approach within which nations are the product of ethnic groups' development, and ethnic groups, in their turn, are natural entities, which can be understood by way of analogy with biological populations (for more information, see Malakhov, 2005, pp.52–58).

Essentialism: (from the Latin *essentia*) Often a methodological accompaniment to primordialism. It is a method that implies the discovery of the true "nature of things", attributing a certain essence to social phenomena, a compulsory set of constant traits/features, qualities and attributes. It is the conviction that the discovery of the true nature of the observed phenomenon is the goal of science, which is attainable with the help of certain theories and approaches. The conviction in the existence of such essential knowledge puts it above criticism.

Retrospection: Interpretation of previous events through the prism of the time, in which the narrator exists.

Representation: Portrayal of reality from a certain standpoint (L. Phillips and M.V. Jorgensen).

Socialisation: A process whereby children or other members of society learn to live in that society. Socialisation is the main way to transfer cultural values from generation to generation. The initial socialisation takes place in infancy and childhood. Secondary socialisation takes place at a more mature age, when a number of functions are alienated from the family, whose functions are transferred to school, peers, various institutions, mass media, etc. (Anthony Giddens).

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4

THEME FOUR:
Political Manipulation and Political Technologies

THEME FOUR: POLITICAL MANIPULATION AND POLITICAL TECHNOLOGIES

Goal:

To understand how conflict and psychological phenomena associated with conflict can be utilised for political goals.

Objectives:

- To understand which contexts intensify political manipulation;
- To understand which technologies are used for manipulation;
- To understand the implications for society of political manipulation of conflict.

Sub-themes:

- The use of psychological images related to conflict to motivate society towards a political choice;
- The inward projection of enemy images on to society itself – a search for internal enemies – "enemies of the people".

1. Exercise: Beware of manipulation　　15 mins

Aim: To link the theme of political manipulation to one's own experience and socio-political context; to draw parallels between different contexts and to identify similarities and differences; to identify similar stereotypes, techniques and clichés; and to make a list of topics used for manipulation.

Insights: To understand the "relative benefit" of conflict for the purposes of internal political manipulation.

Plan: The participants discuss in pairs examples of political manipulation in their own contexts. The facilitator asks the participants to recall during which particular periods manipulation emerges and asks them to answer the following questions:

1. When is the collective consciousness manipulated most commonly (for example, during an election)?
2. What themes are used in the manipulative discourse?
3. What promises are made?

2. Interactive lecture: The dynamics of the conflict theme in internal discourse　　30 mins

- Political strategies and use of conflict-related topics; discrediting of "patriotism";
- The relative benefits of conflict for certain political forces in domestic political processes

Lecture content:

Conflict and enemy images create fertile ground for political manipulation. Accusing one's political opponent of having links with the "other side" ("the enemy") is the quickest way to discredit that opponent. Studies show that the use of enemy images in political struggle is widespread in the South Caucasus.[1] In this sense, the existence of an enemy image (and the related conflict) contains **relative benefits** (see Glossary) for certain political circles.

Political manipulation often intensifies during election campaigns, when politicians try to gain more votes. The practice whereby various political groups recruit supporters and legitimise political claims by manipulating public opinion is quite widespread in the post-Soviet countries. Since real external threats are inherent in the unresolved ethno-political conflicts, an "enemy image" is often used to manipulate public opinion. Appeals to the "enemy" theme help the authorities to justify their failures in foreign and domestic policies to their citizens. Various political groups use the enemy image in an attempt to discredit their political opponents.

Political manipulation is implemented through **political technologies**. Political technologies are a method of exerting social influence in order to change perceptions, attitudes and behaviour of particular individuals or particular social groups in such a way as to promote the manipulator's interests. As an instrument of social control, manipulation of

1　See J. Javakhishvili and L. Kvarchelia (Eds.) (2013). *Myths and Conflict in the South Caucasus: Instrumentalisation of Conflict in Political Discourse*. London: International Alert.

the "enemy image" helps ensure that the electorate should behave in a way advantageous to a particular political group, while still under the illusion of exercising free choice. This practice is aimed at suppressing critical thinking in society, at ensuring "lack of full understanding" and reducing the level of awareness by provoking sensory-emotional reactions that undermine rational interpretation of reality. In closed societies, the use of an "enemy ideologeme" as a political technique produces a '*specific drop in institutional "complexity", suppresses modernisation processes, creates a plebeian simplification or flattens society's socio-cultural organisation*'.[2]

The larger part of society lacks the powers of critical perception to analyse political technologies, becoming part of the "crowd", which is easy to manipulate (refer to the "crowd psychology" effect or "herd instinct", Wilfred Trotter). To resist manipulation, the "crowd" needs to become a group of thinking individuals in possession of the knowledge and skills necessary for critical thinking.

The lack of awareness, on the one hand, and the value system dominant in society, on the other, are the main factors in the formation of the socio-political discourse, in which various mythologised images (friend/enemy/neighbour) and stereotypes (patriot/traitor/security) are closely related to each other.

Patriotism, as a value, is frequently used as a "tool" of manipulation. This concept is perceived as an unambiguously positive phenomenon, especially in societies where security is a topical issue. In such societies, intolerance towards minorities (ethnic, religious, sexual) and towards dissent is often presented as an expression of "patriotism". The arguments in favour of this position, based on the need to "preserve the species" and "the traditions" and the importance of resisting "outside influence", are perceived by society as an expression of patriotism.

Why do people perceive things this way? First, a certain "juggling" takes place, whereby the object of manipulation is presented in the context of that society's needs and values. Political manipulation is often based on society's accepted "truths" – systems of dos and don'ts, the "good" and the "bad". However, since the "truth" is defined in a certain context, a society incapable of reflection cannot resist manipulation.

When social-political processes are perceived critically, the very same patriotism may become a mechanism for resisting manipulation. That is, the critical perception of a situation does not make people less patriotic – they just become less susceptible to manipulation.

The mass media play a hugely important role in this issue, both in the positive and the negative sense. The media can be used as a tool of manipulation *and* a tool for exposing such manipulation.

2   L. Gudkov. 'Negative identity'. Articles published in 1997–2002. Author's collection. M. *New Literary Review*, 2004.

3. Game: Stereotypes and clichés in the political glossary   30 mins

Goal: To understand the purpose of manipulation and who its subjects, objects, target audience and support groups are; why do manipulative techniques often succeed?

Insights: To imagine oneself in a politician's shoes, to experience the "mechanics" of drawing up political messages, the temptation to resort to manipulation and its nature.

Plan: The audience is divided into four groups of five people each. Two groups represent the national-patriotic and neoconservative forces, of Russia and the United States, respectively. Two other groups represent the liberal forces in Russia and the United States. The groups must draw up a message to their voters in the run-up to an election. In their message, they should set forth their party's priorities, followed by appeals to unity. While one of the groups is making a presentation, the other participants try to make a list of the images used in the presentation.

During the discussion after the game, the participants are asked to identify similar and different clichés and to explain their purpose and the effect they are expected to reach. The following questions can be used for the discussion:

- What is the purpose of manipulation?
- Who can be its subjects, objects, target audience and support groups?
- Why do manipulation techniques often succeed?

4. Alternative role-play/interactive exercise   50 mins

Goal: To understand the purpose of manipulation, and who are its subjects, objects, target audience and support groups; why do manipulation techniques often succeed?

Insights: Awareness of taboo topics and their impact on society; awareness of how manipulation limits one's choices; and awareness of the manipulation of conflict with the purpose of stalling democratic development.

Role-play: A parliamentary session is discussing the issue of increasing the military budget. The MPs have to vote "for" or "against" – the decision is made by a simple majority.

The roles:

- Position 1. An MP – a war veteran – advocating a budget increase, profiles him/herself in society as a patriot whose main mission is to ensure the country's security.
- Opponent 1. An MP – a human rights activist, known as an advocate of resolving conflicts through dialogue.
- The speaker of parliament – balancing between the two positions.
- Liberal MPs (a minority).
- Traditionalist MPs (a majority).
- Other MPs (in a majority if join forces with the Liberals).

The situation:

Position 1: Proposes to increase the military budget in the light of the growing external threat, makes a speech to the Parliament and explains his/her position using "patriotic considerations".

Opponent 1: Is against this proposal, arguing that the money should be spent on other, more important needs, such as reforming democratic institutions and the judiciary, creating new jobs and social programmes. In addition, he/she opposes this proposal, saying that an arms race would exacerbate the situation, and proposes steps to boost dialogue.

Before the parliamentary session, journalists had circulated reports pointing to links between Position 1 and arms suppliers, who are lobbying relevant changes in the budget. The journalists believe that Position 1 may have a personal commercial interest in this matter.

Each of the role-play actors receives a detailed briefing on their behavioural model and prepares a presentation to parliament. The rest of the training group makes up the parliament divided into three groups – the advocates of the motion, its opponents and the undecided. After the main opponents have made their presentations, followed by a Q&A session, parliament votes on this issue. After the vote, the results are summed up and each voter's choice is discussed.

Concluding discussion: The social consequences of manipulation   15 mins

Glossary

Cliché: An idea or an expression that has become overused to the point of losing its original meaning and novelty. The concept of cliché has been aptly described by Salvador Dali: 'The first man to compare the cheeks of a young woman to a rose was obviously a poet; the first to repeat it was possibly an idiot'.

Conservatism: A political ideology based on society's traditional values. The conservatives' basic value is a public and state good. Together with liberalism, it is one of the two main polar political ideologies. Accordingly, conservative parties' basic doctrine is loyalty to time-tested traditions. Compared to their opponents – the liberals – the conservatives are less open to the outside world, explaining this position mainly by the fact that values from outside are harmful. The US Republican Party, being one of the two strongest political forces, holds conservative views (social or American conservatism).[3] In 2009, the party in power in Russia, the United Russia, formally proclaimed "Russian conservatism" as their ideology.[4] The most prominent representatives of this political orientation in the United States are Theodore Roosevelt, Dwight Eisenhower, Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan; and in Russia, Dmitriy Medvedev and Vladimir Putin.

Liberalism: A political ideology promoting the rights and freedoms of the individual. Liberalism seeks to create a society with freedom of action for everybody, supremacy of law, private property and freedom of private enterprise. According to the liberal ideology, the state should have limited powers and function as a system responsible for guaranteeing the rule of law, human rights and free market relations. In contrast to the conservatives, who advocate the preservation of the existing system, the liberals argue for continued reform of the existing system. This lies at the basis of the constant ideological confrontation between the two ideologies. The US Democratic Party is a centre-left party which upholds social-liberal views, also known as American liberalism.[5] The most famous representatives of this orientation in the USA are John F. Kennedy, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama; and in Russia Boris Yeltsin, Yegor Gaidar, Boris Nemtsov and Grigory Yavlinsky.

National Patriots: A political force whose ideology is based on the idea of national unity (Motherland) and the titular nation (the ethnic group dominant in that country).[6] A national ideology, based on the identity of "own" nation, credits itself with exceptional merits and rights and often sets itself in opposition to external forces. The national ideology and the nation's uniqueness are often presented to society as the only true form of patriotism. The most characteristic theme used to influence society is a call to unity, which often turns into rejection of dissent.

Neoconservatism: A movement which originated within the US Democratic Party at the end of the Vietnam War and advocated the use of US economic and military power to defeat hostile regimes.[7] Supporting liberal views in domestic policy matters, the neoconservatives were more conservative than the Democrats on foreign policy issues. The emergence of neoconservatives in the United States marked the start of a period of mixed political ideologies, which continues to this day not only in the USA but around the world.

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3   For more information (in Russian), see http://window.edu.ru/resource/417/38417/files/miem2005-24.pdf
4   http://ria.ru/politics/20091121/194856090.html
5   http://samlib.ru/m/molchanow_s_m/uspoliticalpartiesatpresent.shtml
6   For more information, see http://www.partinform.ru/ros_mn/rm_6.htm
7   http://nuclearno.ru/text.asp?12100

Patriotism: The concept of "patriotism" in English was first used in the early 18th century; it is understood to mean love and dedication to one's motherland. This concept was especially widely used by Enlightenment figures such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In 1774, English writer Samuel Johnson criticised ostentatious false patriotism in his work *The Patriot*, and coined the phrase: 'Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel'. The concept of patriotism is close to nationalism. Therefore, it is currently seen as a phenomenon that borders on and risks spilling into an extreme form of nationalism, i.e. ethnic nationalism, which implies discrimination and preferential treatment based on ethnicity (this ideology views one ethnic group as standing above the other, effectively promoting a discriminatory treatment).

Political technologies: A collection of methods of influencing people, making it possible to change their way of thinking, beliefs, mood and behaviour, used by political actors to achieve political goals.

Psychological manipulation: A veiled social influence aimed at changing other people's views and behaviour in the interests of the manipulator, the use of unauthorised (fraudulent, possibly offensive) methods.

Stereotypes: The established attitudes to events, phenomena, actions, etc., which, on the one hand, help one orient oneself in the world, while, on the other hand, simplifying/diluting the perception of reality to such an extent that they limit one's ability to perceive nuances, differences and unique attributes.

Relative benefit: A relative benefit is understood to mean, on the one hand, that an enemy image is advantageous to society to a certain extent – for example, uniting it and thus minimising internal conflicts ("Now is not the time to fight each other, as the enemy is on its guard") – but, on the other hand, this advantage is relative because the enemy image then begins to stall democratic development in society (with the same argument: "Now is not the time for democracy, the enemy is on its guard") and makes it susceptible to internal political manipulation.

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5

THEME FIVE:

Media Literacy and Conflict

THEME FIVE: MEDIA LITERACY AND CONFLICT

Goal:

To develop reflective/critical attitude to media information linked to conflicts; to raise the level of media literacy.

Objectives:

- To understand the role of media in creating, disseminating and sustaining social myths, especially, myths linked to conflicts;
- To acquire knowledge about the criteria for recognition professional media coverage and media manipulation.

Themes:

- Professional media coverage;
- News, sources of information, their reliability, diversity and balance;
- Differentiating between facts and their interpretation;
- Media ethics;
- Conscious choices and decisions based on verifiable information;
- Conflict coverage.

1. Role play: Event coverage   90 mins

Aim: To develop skills for dealing with media information.

Insights: To cover events professionally and, therefore, reliably, we must have several balanced sources; the sources must be reliable and the facts must be covered/presented, but not interpreted. If you cover a conflict, it is necessary to use sources which represent all the sides which are party to the conflict.

Role-play: The players are given an event to cover which is played out by five to eight members of the group. The plot may be as follows (facilitators are free to suggest their own version of the plot):

A fire broke out in the shopping centre. Firefighters put it out. Police and local government representatives are already at the scene of the fire. Also at the scene there are victims and their relatives who have found out about the incident. Some victims can't be found by the relatives who are worried about them and searching for them. There is a suspicion that this was a terrorist attack. People are even putting forward suggestions of who might be responsible. At the time the relatives of the missing persons are blaming the management of the shopping centre for non-compliance with the health and safety regulations. A conflict is brewing.

Four volunteers offer to play the part of journalists. They work in two teams of two journalists. They are free to invent what media agency they work for, to choose the format in which they will present information to the local paper, and to decide who they will interview. After they have collected sufficient information, they are given 15 minutes to compose their newspaper article on the story. The pairs of 'journalists' read out their articles to be assessed by a panel of judges, together with the rest of the participants. They will discuss the quality of the 'articles' based on the following criteria:

- Facts and not interpretation;
- Use of several balanced sources;
- Use of reliable sources;
- Independence of journalist.

The criteria are set by the facilitator who is a member of the panel of judges.

2. Interactive lecture: Media literacy   20-25 mins

The lecture starts with a short brainstorming session: "What do you think we mean by media literacy?" and the participants offer their answers. The facilitator sums it up as follows:

If the notion of literacy was restricted in the past to the area of knowledge and skills necessary to read and write, today's world has a whole array of challenges for the modern person: from computer literacy to media literacy. Media literacy implies that a person must be prepared (literate) to perceive and construct information from the media in a reflective, critical manner. This need arose because today people are bombarded with a significant amount of information. Moreover, this information is often incomplete, selective and thus, biased, which is often confusing. As a result, people buy things they don't need (due to advertising), or harm their health when they try out various dietary substances, which are widely publicised. Additionally, biased information leads to the formation of attitudes of hatred and enmity, which feed into the creation/deepening of the enemy image and which exacerbate various types of conflicts (political, ethnic, social, etc). A media-versed person, on the contrary, is more immune to becoming a victim of media information or media manipulation, because he/she is prepared to spot and decipher complex messages, sent by the mass media. In particular:

A media-literate person can distinguish between the following formats of media coverage *(see PowerPoint presentation 5.1 "Media Literacy")*:

- **News,** where professional information is presented about the most pertinent events within a certain time frame;
- **Advertising,** which tries to sell products;
- **Propaganda or spin**, which is "commissioned" by politicians and which is aimed at changing opinion or behaviour of the audience in relation to a certain event;
- **Public relations** information, which PR agents disseminate on behalf of companies or individuals to strengthen their image;
- **Entertainment** information, which creates an alternative world for the consumer, where he/she can disengage from reality and relax;
- **"Raw", unverified information** for immediate consumption, which is not edited.

A media-literate consumer must first of all recognise, what media form he/she is dealing with, in order to decipher it and draw a conclusion about reliability and accuracy of the disseminated information.

A media-literate person is able to deconstruct media news:
(see PowerPoint presentation 5.2 "News Deconstruction")

He/she is aware what the significance of news is and can assess the potential impact on the audience, promptness, level of prominence of the participants, geographic proximity of the event, how extraordinary it is, conflicts, timeliness and the duration of the event.

He/she can reflect on the following: what type of information is offered – facts, assumptions or interpretation/opinion; the independence of the journalist covering the event; how accountable this journalist is to the public; the degree of his/her accessibility and whether questions can be put to him/her about the particulars of the event; the transparency of the

information-gathering process by the journalist. In addition, a media- literate person can assess the quality of the presented information, determine the main message of the news coverage and whether the introduction, or the "lead", corresponds to the main contents, how the information answers the main questions, i.e. who, what, where, when, why and how, in what way and whether it corresponds to the so-called **inverted pyramid** structure (see Glossary).

A media-literate person knows and uses, upon reflection, the principles of accuracy, neutrality and reliability of information.

3. Exercises on accuracy, neutrality and reliability of information

Mini-exercise 1. Impartiality (as well as reliability and accuracy)   5 mins
(see PowerPoint presentation 5.3 "Al Jazeera/BBC")

Here the facilitator introduces diagrams to the audience that demonstrate the research explaining how the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is covered by the BBC and Al-Jazeera. The diagrams demonstrate that only an insignificant number of the BBC and Al-Jazeera reports on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict take into account Palestinian sources. The facilitator asks the audience: "What does this information tell you?" The participants answer. When the suggestion is put forward about the lack of balance of sources, the facilitator stresses that the balance of sources is one of the professional principles of journalism.

Mini-exercise 2. Reliability (as well as accuracy and impartiality)   5 mins
(see PowerPoint presentation 5.4 "Information Sources")

The facilitator tells the audience, "There is information in the media that, according to the latest poll, President X is much more popular than President Y". The facilitator then asks, "What do you think is missing from this information?"

Let us assume that the audience will ask a number of questions:

- Who carried out this poll? How independent is the polling agency?
- Who was the poll conducted amongst? How representative is the sample of respondents?
- Exactly what questions were asked?
- What was the methodology of the poll?

Using these questions, the facilitator will introduce the theme "Sources of information", providing the following definition: "Sources" are the people who possess or disseminate information. The source can disclose itself or remain anonymous. The source can be either identified by name/surname (the so-called "identified source"), or remain unidentified ("unidentified source"), when the only things known about him/her will be his/her position or status, and sometimes there will be no such information. An authoritative/reputable source is a source that has personal/professional achievements that add weight to his/her statement (see "the power of nomination" in part three of this module "Heroes and Anti-heroes"). The so-called "independent source" has no interest either in this information or in the outcome of the situation it refers to, which makes his/her information especially valuable (as it rules

out any bias). The disseminated information can be based on one or more sources or have no sources at all, which diminishes its reliability. Towards the end of explaining the concept of "information sources", the facilitator asks the participants to tell him/her which sources can be reliable.

Mini-exercise 3: Accuracy (as well as impartiality and reliability)   30 mins

Aim: To acquire skills to differentiate between facts and their interpretation.

Insights: Understanding the need to differentiate between facts and their interpretation, the need to diversify the media we consume; the need to make a more informed choice.

3.1 PowerPoint presentation 5.5 "Facts and Opinions"   5 mins

3.2 Exercise: "Facts or interpretation?"   10 mins

Materials: Video coverage of the same event by at least two TV channels. One channel provides more or less balanced information based on facts, the second provides mainly interpretation.

Plan: At the plenary session, the facilitator shows the coverage of the first, then second, TV channel and asks the group to discuss the differences, the messages and how each channel covers the information. The participants share their insights and a conclusion is drawn on the difference between facts and interpretation.

3.3 Exercise: Facts or interpretation?   15 mins

Materials: Newspaper publications plus two felt-tip pens for each participant. Each facilitator must prepare the relevant material where interpretations prevail over facts, in the native language of the audience.

Plan: The participants are given newspaper articles, no longer than a page each. They must highlight the facts using one colour and interpretations with a different colour. Afterwards, the participants are asked to read out some examples of facts and interpretations.

4. Lecture: Media manipulation and "spin"   15 mins

(see the PowerPoint presentation 5.6 "Spin")
[The facilitator could find a small video example depicting local spin]

Lecture content:

The term "spin" comes from "spin-off", which literally means "to draw out and twist". Spin is very manipulative and therefore the least ethical type of PR. In particular, spin is used to create through the media a certain opinion in a certain audience regarding a certain event, person or a group of people. In essence, spin is propaganda. This is why politicians resort to spin more than most. Spin is a regular occurrence in the advertising business, which is why a number of countries have introduced legal regulations to prevent it: for example, in 2009, the US Federal Trade Commission banned spin tactics in the media.

> **Edward Louis Bernays – the "father" of PR**
>
> The founder of spin is the "father" of PR, an American of Jewish Hungarian origin Edward Louis Bernays (1891–1995), who believed that society was dangerous because of its herd mentality, and who thought that because of this society must be directed with the help of propaganda, which he euphemistically called "public relations". He is responsible for the successful promotion of such ideas as 'The US militarist actions are carried out to spread democracy in Europe'; 'You should have a good breakfast – bacon and eggs' (to further bacon sales); 'Smoking in public places is a symbol of female equality and cigarettes are the lanterns of freedom' (PR for tobacco industry to draw women into smoking[1]). etc. He was a rather inventive person and, since he saw nothing wrong with propaganda (and truly thought it necessary), he often falsified facts: for example, he presented advertising in the form of news (which today is considered a gross violation of professional ethics). Despite such contradictions, he laid the foundations for a new trade, as well as the foundations of modern forms of PR work. For example, he drew attention to the format of a press release, which had been tried out by yet another PR pioneer, Ivy Ledbetter Lee, in 1906. Bernays started to use and promote it and today we can't imagine contemporary communication strategies without a press release.

In Western culture, spin is so well known that there is a special vocabulary to describe it. For example, rooms where politicians (especially ruling circles) hold press conferences are called spin rooms; people preparing spin are spin doctors; the process of spin preparation is called spin-doctoring, etc. Unlike in the West, while spin itself does exist in post-Soviet societies, the very notion of spin is something new; the word is not in usage, and there is no concomitant vocabulary to denote spin. In psychology, often if you don't name something, it may go unnoticed.

In addition to its own "language", spin uses a number of rhetorical tactics, which make it possible to manipulate information. It is important to know these tactics, in order to become more aware of them and, consequently, to hone the ability to perceive the texts where they are used in a critical way. The rhetorical tactics, used in spin, are based on the universal principles of generalisation, omission and distortion of information, described in theme 1 of this module "Myth as a Form of Social Consensus".

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1   In the 1960s, he began to work with anti-smoking organisations and organised several anti-smoking campaigns.

Some well-known tactics include:

- Using euphemisms to "camouflage" one's own interests: for example, "We had a disagreement…" in a situation when a fight broke out; or the example with E.L. Bernays, who once substituted the word "propaganda" with "public relations", etc.;
- While stating something overtly, state something different covertly: for example, saying, "Our company's representative is as exacting as our opponent". Such rhetorical tactics allows a veiled reference to the opponent being exacting to slip unnoticed, because it is preceded by a clear statement about the company's representative being exacting;
- "Masking" bad news: presenting it together (or after) the good news, in order to distract the audience;
- "Cherry-picking": selective presentation of the facts, choosing only those facts that correspond to the interests of those who commissioned the spin. One of the examples of such selection is the suggestion of a false choice, when only two choices are suggested as available, out of a multitude of all possible choices;
- Avoiding responsibility for what has been done: for example, using the phrase "Mistakes were made", with no apparent perpetrator in it so that the speaker can avoid assuming responsibility for the mistakes;
- "Non-denying denial": when you don't deny exactly what you are being accused of but make negative comments, for example: "Let those who say that I am corrupt look me in the eye"; "I am not even going to respond to this nonsense"; "This is the limit, to accuse me of this", etc.;
- Apologies without apologising: to apologise without remorse, for example: "I am sorry you felt that way/took it that way"; "If I offended people, I am sorry".

5. Interactive lecture on media ethics

It is possible to minimise the opportunity for manipulation by the media and the potential damage it can cause through professional ethical regulation and compliance. Media ethics or journalist ethical code, or the "Canons of journalism", are a set of ethical norms of professional conduct, which are written (and constantly being rewritten) by professional associations and media organisations.

Today, there are various codes of media ethics, yet all of them have a core, consisting of such principles as:

- Truthfulness;
- Accuracy;
- Objectivity;
- Neutrality;
- Justness;
- Accountability to society/audience.

Each facilitator can collect materials on ethical regulation in their own country/region/society, for the session on media ethics.

Below, we list a number of principles of journalistic ethics, suggested by Jay Black, Bob Steele and Ralph Barney in 1998, in 'Doing Ethics in Journalism', authored by the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ[2]). Here four ethical principles, strongly recommended by the SPJ to follow in professional practice, are put forward. They are:

- To search for truthful and objective information and to cover events as fully (from as many sides) as possible;
- To act independently;
- To minimise potential damage ("do no harm" in journalism);
- To be responsible/accountable to the reference society.

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2   One of the oldest professional associations of journalists in the US, founded in April 1907, it promotes freedom of speech and high professional standards.

INTRODUCTION

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Glossary

Lead: Introduction, first lines (20–25 words) of the news bulletin that impart to the reader/ viewer the main message of the publication/report.

News: A special way of presenting information in the papers, on TV, radio, with its specific language, structure, its own so-called news style. It answers the following questions: who, what, where, when, why and very often at the beginning of the news they tell us also how. The news is current, up-to-date, it takes into account the interests of the audience, extraordinariness of the event, proximity of the event to the media audience, and potential impact of the event on the audience's life.

PR – Public Relations: From the English – relations with the public; the term was introduced by Edward L. Bernays at the beginning of the 20th century. Today this term applies to the practice of managing a stream of information between a person/group/organisation/subject and society. The purpose is to create a certain public opinion about the subject.

Inverted pyramid structure: A metaphor describing the structure of the news, where the most important part of information comes first (headline, then lead, etc.), followed by other information in the order of descending significance. First, it is a way of capturing the audience's attention and, second, irrespective of where the media consumer ceases to process further information, he/she will have already received an idea of what happened.

Recommended reading

Jay Black, Bob Steele and Ralph D. Barney (1998). *Doing Ethics in Journalism: A Handbook With Case Studies*. New York: Allyn.

Information resources:

- Society of Professional Journalists
  www.spj.org
- International Center for Journalists
  www.icfj.org
- Institute for War and Peace Reporting
  www.iwpr.net
- News University International
  www.newsu.org/ru
- Poynter
  www.poynter.org
- International Journalists' Network
  www.Ijnet.org
- BBC Russian
  www.bbc.co.uk/russian
- BBC Academy Journalist School
  www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/russian

EVALUATION

EVALUATION

1. General impressions – what did you like about the training?

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2. What could be improved?

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3. What new knowledge or skills did you gain?

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4. Has the training in any way changed any part of your mind-set, opinion, outlook – and if so, in what way?

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5. Which exercises or lectures did you like most and why?

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6. Which themes covered by this training would you like to study in more depth?

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Thank you for your honesty!