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OF “SOVEREIGNTY” IN MODERN
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(COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF
CONTEMPORARY DISCOURSE
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CHINA)**

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Based on idea of the analysis of symbolic representations of sovereignty and framework of poststructuralist international relations theory this research is exploring the performative nature of sovereignty in a comparative empirical perspective. We have taken four well-known speeches on sovereignty issues to see which symbolic representations of sovereignty were involved in the specific discourse of the four presidents: France, the United States of America, Russia and China. In the analysed symbolic representations of sovereignty we encounter important differences synthesize ten symbolic representations of sovereignty that are common to all four examined discourses.

Keywords: Russia, France, USA, China, Sovereignty, Symbolic Representations

JEL Classification: Z

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The theoretical research framework of this paper is based on the idea of the analysis of symbolic representations of sovereignty. It originates from the poststructuralist international relations theory and conceptual texts on sovereignty by J. Bartelson, M. Freeden, C. Weber, and several other scholars. The methodology of the poststructuralist approach to the analysis of world politics is based on the principle of intertextuality, understood as the ability of texts in various ways explicitly or implicitly refer to each other, including through performative means of the language. Here we focus on the performance of “sovereignty” through certain symbolic means of language, in particular, through what an American scholar Cynthia Weber called “symbolic representations of sovereignty”. According to C. Weber, states are ‘written’ effects of attempts to exert effective control over representation, both political and symbolic. ‘Political’ representation involves a presumed exchange between the state and its citizenry. A citizenry authorizes the state to serve as its agent so long as the state honours its obligation to stand for the interests of that citizenry domestically and internationally. What makes this relationship between the state and its citizenry possible is a second type of representation – “symbolic representation” understood as the act of depiction, the act of portraying officialised myth. In this case, what is portrayed is the mystical source of sovereign authority, “the people”. Symbolic representation is a strategy whereby the sovereign authority of the state is “written” or invented in a specific form which serves as the grounding principle of the state (Weber, 1992: 216). Under sovereignty *per se* we will understand “everything that allows to set order within a territorial polity and interact with the rulers of other territories” (Il’yin, 2008: 20-21).

Swedish expert on sovereignty J. Bartelson in one of his recent interpretations of this phenomenon sees sovereignty as a symbolic form by means of which Westerners have perceived and organized their political world during the modern period. According to Bartelson “the concept of symbolic form refers to the specific structures used to organize what otherwise would be a disorderly experience into intelligible wholes. These structures can be understood as modes of objectivation that allow us to combine elements of experience according to generic principles open to endless modification, while existing independently of their end results (Bartelson, 2014: 14). C. Weber tells us that political speeches “can be analyzed as performative enactments of a state’s sovereignty” (Weber, 1998: 216). However, it is obvious that the performativity of sovereignty can be expressed not only by verbal means. The place, time, and context, in which symbolic representations of sovereignty are built, including its non-verbal performative practices, also matter. These performative practices acquaint sovereignty with the construction of the collective identity. According to Dutch scholar Tanya Aalberts the performative nature of the discursive practices of sovereignty display themselves in a fact that sovereignty not only

describes, but also constitutes itself a certain political reality (Aalberts, 2016: 184). Therefore we agree with renowned Oxford professor M.Freeden who concludes that sovereignty in the political sense “is endowed with an extraordinary salience as the privileged position of the safeguarding and firming up of collective identity... Collective identity is a set of deep-rooted cultural, religious, gender, and ethnic attributes relating to belonging, and thinking in terms of sovereignty is their political incarnation, serving as a legal and formal, as well as mythical, consolidating and protecting framework” (Freeden, 2013: 120). In particular, according to Freeden, the idea of sovereignty acts as a container and justification for the privatization of social and cultural space.

Based on idea of C.Weber, **the goal of this research** is to explore the performative nature of sovereignty in a comparative empirical perspective. We therefore have taken four well-known speeches on sovereignty issues to see which symbolic representations of sovereignty were enacted in the specific discourse of the four presidents – France, the United States of America, Russia and China. These are the speech of the French President Emmanuel Macron to the deputies of the European Parliament delivered on April 17, 2018 the speech of the American President Donald Trump in the United Nations on September 25, 2018, the talk of the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin in front of the Federal Assembly on December 4, 2014 and the speech of the president of the People’s Republic of China Xi Jinping delivered at the 20th Anniversary of Hong Kong's Return to China and the Inauguration Ceremony of the Fifth Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on June 1, 2017. Within our analysis, we have used texts in the languages of their origin (French, English, Russian and Chinese original phrases respectively sometimes are provided in brackets after English where that is justified from the point of view of a hermeneutic analysis). We considered text versions published on the official websites of the European Parliament, the White House, Moscow Kremlin, and Xinhua News Agency.

Promoting the idea of reviving European identity (in french - *souveraineté européenne réinventée*), President of France E. Macron addressed on April 17, 2018 to deputies of the European Parliament. Based on the methodology of constructing a “grounded theory” (Charmaz and Thornberg 2014, 153), we encoded 23 uses of “sovereignty” and identified in the text of president Macron ten following symbolic representations and key metaphors of sovereignty.

1.1 The first important symbolic representation of sovereignty in the speech of the French president is the declared by him need for “building” a new European sovereignty. Here symbolic representation of sovereignty is shown as some “*construction that protects against (external and internal) challenges*”. In a metaphorical form, Macron argues that “we can and must build a new European sovereignty (*une nouvelle souveraineté européenne*), with which we will give our

fellow citizens a clear and firm answer that we can protect them and give a reply to these unrests in the world” (Macron, 2018) (previously Macron talked about geopolitical, climatic and authoritarian challenges of our times). Moreover, it is important that here the French president directly bridges the problems of sovereignty and his own political identification. In particular, he states: “I want to belong to the generation that will protect this European sovereignty, because we fought for its possession, because it makes sense, and because it is the condition that will allow future generations to choose themselves and their future” (Macron, 2018).

The key metaphor in this case will be sovereignty as a process and result of “building and fighting for new Europe” (*ces souverainetés européennes, nous devons continuer à les bâtir*) in order to protect new Europe against external and internal challenges. Already after his speech, answering the questions of the deputies of the European Parliament, Macron once again emphasized that he “believes in Europe, which can protect itself”. He formulated this idea as follows: “This is the basis of sovereignty. Sovereignty is both the ability to defend oneself and the ability to articulate one's voice together (*dans le concert*) with other nations and internationally” (Macron, 2018). We also remember that, developing his own ideas of sovereignty in November 2018, Macron proposed the idea of a European army, referring to the fact that the army is also perceived as one of the elements of the sovereignty of the state.

1.2 Representation of sovereignty as “*a symbol of the unity of Europe*”. “Faced with all the current tension with some neighbours, such as Russia, - said the French president, - Europe demonstrated it face of “unity and sovereignty”. We need to continue this work” (Macron, 2018). Here his key metaphor was “sovereignty as a symbol of unity”. Another example relates to the principle of mutual aid: “This also applies to our sovereignty, and I want to clearly state that France will always be on the side of any member state (*État membre*) at the moment when its sovereignty is under attack. This is a position that we firmly keep from the very first day in relation to Great Britain, when the scandal with the “Skripal case” occurred. This is also the position that we constantly take alongside Greece when it is threatened in the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea. A few days ago, I spoke with Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras. We will always have this position, because the heart of our common sovereignty (*souveraineté commune*) is a solidarity between us” (Macron, 2018).

1.3 Sovereignty is also symbolically represented in a form of an “*economic and commercial sovereignty*”. The French president appeals to this concept twice in his speech. Moreover, it is clear that this is not a direct understanding of the word “sovereignty”, but its an extrapolation from the political to the economic domain (just as below we will see the allotting to sovereignty in the field of environmental protection and energy).

1.4 “*The Climate sovereignty*”. In Macron’s opinion, sovereignty is also an issue of environment, energy policy and climate (French “la souveraineté, *c’est aussi la souveraineté climatique et énergétique*”). Macron claims climate sovereignty to be indispensable, so “we will have to open the debate quickly to raise the European contribution to the Paris Agreement” (Macron, 2018).

1.5 “*The Energy sovereignty*”. Answering the questions after his speech, Macron expressed concerns about the possible loss of the “energy sovereignty” in united Europe: “I fully understand your concerns about Nord Stream 2 and I must tell you that Chancellor Angela Merkel herself spoke a few days ago, admitting that it was an extremely sensitive issue, because it casts doubt on our collective sovereignty, our energy sovereignty in relation to Russia... We must reduce the share of nuclear energy, however we must do so at a pace that allows us to maintain this sovereignty. If the closure of power plants leads to the re-opening of coal power stations, something that, unfortunately, took place in Germany, then you worsen your CO2 balance, which is exactly contrary to our Paris Agreements. And if high rates of reduction of nuclear energy take place without preserving our energy sovereignty, and this leads to an increase in your dependence on this or that non-European sovereign state, especially from Russia, in terms of energy imports, then this is not a good solution of the problem” (Macron, 2018).

1.6 “*Sovereignty in the field of health and nutrition*” – in the text of the presidential speech, this expression is also mentioned twice: “In our daily politics, when choosing a budget for today and tomorrow, we must maintain the sovereignty of high-quality food. This is what our citizens expect from us, this is what we must provide them. This is good for our economy and our territory, this is good for our fellow citizens, and this is a consistent choice from the point of view of our commitments in the long term” (Macron, 2018).

1.7 “*Digital sovereignty*” (“la souveraineté numérique”), according to the French president, protects the personal data of our fellow citizens in a cyberspace. Macron claims that Europe is becoming the only geographical space in the world where they promote breakthrough innovations. “I will defend these choices in the coming debates, and at the same time, we put ourselves in a position to protect individual liberties” ((Macron, 2018).

1.8 “*The sovereignty of a socially oriented Europe*” implies that “this social Europe (*Europe sociale*) is also a part of our sovereignty, in foundation of which we believe” (Macron, 2018). The same paragraph also refers to the social protection of the European population and, in a sense, Macron facilitates the idea of European protectionism (*l’image d’une Europe protectrice*).

1.9 *“Sovereignty as a European revival”* echoes the first symbolic representation — the “new Europe” and the second — “the united Europe”, although it carries additional symbolic meanings: “Europe – it is like an aggregation of all our sovereignty, thanks to even a greater sovereignty, that unites us; it is the Union at service of peace and solidarity, which offers the world a unique space of stability and security. It is here that we must consolidate the revival of Europe, carried out by the very spirit of its peoples” (Macron, 2018).

1.10 *Disassociation of European sovereignty from the “sovereignty of authoritarian states”*: “I will not give in to any enthusiasm for authoritarian sovereignty...” (Macron, 2018).

To summarize, we see that in his address to the deputies of the European Parliament E.Macron not only singled out six types of sovereignty - “economic”, “climatic”, “energy”, “sovereignty in the field of health and nutrition”, “digital” and “socially oriented sovereignty”. He also formulated several important general principles of what he understands by the sovereignty of the “revived Europe”. Now we can compare the case of official French discourse of sovereignty with the sample of official American discourse. For this purpose we picked and analysed the speech of the American President Donald Trump at the United Nations on September 25, 2018. We then divided the passages of the former speech into the models of performativity.

2.1 *“We ask you to honour our sovereignty”*. Addressing UN members, D.Trump began his speech as follows: “I honor the right of every nation in this room to pursue its own customs, beliefs, and traditions. The United States will not tell you how to live or work or worship. We only ask that you honor our sovereignty in return” (Trump, 2018).

2.2 *“Our opponents are those who do not respect the rights of sovereign nations”*. D.Trump gives an example about Iran’s leaders who sow chaos, death, and destruction. “They do not respect their neighbors or borders, or the sovereign rights of nations. Instead, Iran’s leaders plunder the nation’s resources to enrich themselves and to spread mayhem across the Middle East and far beyond” (Trump, 2018).

2.3. *“Sovereignty as another significant step forward”* (where “step” can be considered a metaphor of a geopolitical advancement of USA interests in the Middle East). Regarding the confrontation with Iran, Trump also indicated: “We ask all nations to isolate Iran’s regime as long as its aggression continues. And we ask all nations to support Iran’s people as they struggle to reclaim their religious and righteous destiny. This year, we also took another significant step forward in the Middle East. In recognition of every sovereign state to determine its own capital, I moved the U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem” (Trump, 2018).

2.4. *“We will never give up America’s sovereignty in front of an unaccountable global bureaucracy”* – believes D.Trump. According to his conviction USA “withdrew from the

Human Rights Council, and we will not return until real reform is enacted. For similar reasons, the United States will provide no support in recognition to the International Criminal Court. As far as America is concerned, the ICC has no jurisdiction, no legitimacy, and no authority. The ICC claims near-universal jurisdiction over the citizens of every country, violating all principles of justice, fairness, and due process. We will never surrender America's sovereignty to an unelected, unaccountable, global bureaucracy. America is governed by Americans. We reject the ideology of globalism, and we embrace the doctrine of patriotism" (Trump, 2018). The last statement can be interpreted as a continuation of the "America First" principle previously declared by D.Trump.

2.5 *"The US energy sovereignty as security and independence for themselves and their allies"*. Around the world, responsible nations must defend against threats to sovereignty not just from global governance, but also from other, new forms of coercion and domination. In America, we believe strongly in energy security for ourselves and for our allies. We have become the largest energy producer anywhere on the face of the Earth. The United States stands ready to export our abundant, affordable supply of oil, clean coal, and natural gas. OPEC and OPEC nations, are, as usual, ripping off the rest of the world, and I don't like it. Nobody should like it. We defend many of these nations for nothing, and then they take advantage of us by giving us high oil prices. Not good... Reliance on a single foreign supplier can leave a nation vulnerable to extortion and intimidation. That is why we congratulate European states, such as Poland, for leading the construction of a Baltic pipeline so that nations are not dependent on Russia to meet their energy needs. Germany will become totally dependent on Russian energy if it does not immediately change course" (Trump, 2018).

2.6 *"Sovereignty as the protection of national security in the form of control over migration and foreign investment"*. Trump, for example, emphasized that it was the formal policy of USA since President Monroe that they rejected the interference of foreign nations in their hemisphere and in their own affairs. "The United States has recently strengthened our laws to better screen foreign investments in our country for national security threats, and we welcome cooperation with countries in this region and around the world that wish to do the same. You need to do it for your own protection. The United States is also working with partners in Latin America to confront threats to sovereignty from uncontrolled migration. Tolerance for human struggling and human smuggling and trafficking is not humane. It's a horrible thing that's going on..." (Trump, 2018).

2.7 Talking about sovereignty USA president D.Trump draws connection between the *standing up for "independence, their security, and their sovereignty"*, and being *"great people"*,

for instance people in Poland (Trump, 2018). Such statements, it seems to us, look very much like normative judgements.

2.8 *“Sovereignty as a space of freedom, democracy and peace”*. Trump notes that “sovereign and independent nations are the only vehicle where freedom has ever survived, democracy has ever endured, or peace has ever prospered. And so we must protect our sovereignty and our cherished independence above all” (Trump, 2018).

2.9 *“Sovereignty as the choice of patriotic values”* frame suggests that Trump uses the notions of patriotism as a tool of legitimacy for supporting his vision of sovereignty, for examples he notes: “Let us come here to this place to stand for our people and their nations, forever strong, forever sovereign, forever just, and forever thankful for the grace and the goodness and the glory of God” (Trump, 2018).

The Russian official discourse on sovereignty is much wider than just one case of Address of the Russian President Vladimir Putin to the Federal Assembly, dating December 4, 2014. However, obviously, this is a very significant case because one could expect that, after the “Crimean Spring”, the traditional annual Address of the Russian President to parliament should contain some new conceptual models to explain the changed political realities within the domestic affairs as well as external sanctions against Russia.

3.1. *“Sovereignty as a strong and cohesive state, able to protect its compatriots”*. “This year we faced trials that only a mature and united nation and a truly sovereign and strong state can withstand. Russia has proved that it can protect its compatriots and defend truth and fairness” (Putin, 2014).

3.2. *“Willingness to recognize the sovereignty of countries as public good”*: “It is well known that Russia not only supported Ukraine and other brotherly republics of the former Soviet Union in their aspirations to sovereignty, but also facilitated this process greatly in the 1990s. Since then, our position has remained unchanged” (Putin, 2014). (The above quote can be also interpreted as an attempt to show Russia being unbiased and emphasise moral duty of Ukraine in relation to Russia).

3.3 *The formula of “a sovereign law”*. According to Russian president “every nation has an inalienable sovereign right to determine its own development path, choose allies and political regimes, create an economy and ensure its security. Russia has always respected these rights and always will. This fully applies to Ukraine and the Ukrainian people” (Putin, 2014). Developing this argument on June 2, 2017, during the plenary session at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, the President of the Russian Federation specified which countries, in his opinion, lost and which still retain sovereignty: “There are not so many countries in the world that enjoy the privilege of sovereignty. I do not want to hurt anyone but what Ms.Merkel has said

was dictated, among other things, by long-standing resentment – I assure you, despite whatever she might have said later – over the fact that sovereignty is in fact limited. By the way, it is limited officially within the framework of military-political alliances, where it is stipulated what may and may not be done, but in reality, it is even worse: nothing is permitted except for what is permitted. And who gives permission? The chiefs. And where are the chiefs? They are far away. To reiterate, there are not so many countries that have sovereignty. Russia treasures its sovereignty, but not as a toy. We need sovereignty to protect our interests and to ensure our own development. India has sovereignty and we know it. Now I would like to say something to the Prime Minister. I have never said this to him, even though yesterday we talked face to face for several hours and before that also for several hours, but now I would like to say it to him publicly. We know the position of the Indian Prime Minister, of the Indian leadership, the Indian people and the Indian state regarding all the attempts over the past several years to compel India to adopt a position on Russia that is beneficial for someone but not for the Indian people. Relying on its sovereignty, on the character of its leader and on its national interests, India does not let these advisers push it around. However, there are not so many countries like India in the world. That is true. We should simply bear this in mind. India is one such country and so is China. I will not enumerate them all: There are other countries, too, but not many” (Putin, 2017).

3.4 *“Sovereignty as the ability to maintain the moral pride, dignity and condition of the survival/existence of Russia”*. In opinion of Russian president, most other countries are not capable of sustaining permanent sovereignty. “If for some European countries national pride is a long-forgotten concept and sovereignty is too much of a luxury, true sovereignty for Russia is absolutely necessary for survival. Primarily, we should realise this as a nation. I would like to emphasise this: either we remain a sovereign nation, or we dissolve without a trace and lose our identity. Of course, other countries need to understand this, too” (Putin, 2017). It can be said that the formula “sovereignty is an absolutely necessary condition for its existence” has a clear allusion to issues of “ontological security” and symbolically turns into dilemmas like “either sovereignty or death” or “countries that do not possess sovereignty have already dissolved and generally do not exist any more” (Putin, 2014).

3.5 *The idea of preserving national identity and state sovereignty through transnational integration* (for example, within the Eurasian Economic Union) recalls idea of E.Macron about the sovereignty of the new united Europe discussed above. V.Putin notes that “under no conditions will we curtail our relations with Europe or America. At the same time, we will restore and expand our traditional ties with South America. We will continue our cooperation with Africa and the Middle East. We see how quickly Asia Pacific has been developing over

the past few decades. As a Pacific power, Russia will use this huge potential comprehensively. Everyone knows the leaders and the drivers of global economic development. Many of them are our sincere friends and strategic partners. The Eurasian Economic Union will start working in full on January 1, 2015. I'd like to remind you about its fundamental principles. The topmost principles are equality, pragmatism and mutual respect, as well as the preservation of national identity and state sovereignty of its member countries. I am confident that strong cooperation will become a powerful source of development for all of the Eurasian Economic Union members" (Putin, 2014).

The Peoples Republic of China is widely perceived as one of the strongest supporters of "Westphalian" sovereignty, moreover respecting sovereignty of other countries is one of the longstanding principles of China's foreign policy. This idea is actively promoted by Chinese leaders in their speeches aimed at foreign audiences (China FM refutes... 2018). Speaking about internal affairs – the most important topics for the Chinese leadership when it comes to sovereignty are: managing sovereignty over special administrative regions (Hong Kong and Macao) and protecting its sovereignty over disputed territories. That is why it is not surprising that the speech where president Xi Jinping has used the word sovereignty more often than in his other speeches is closely connected to one of these issues. It was delivered in Hong Kong – a special administrative region of the PRC that is governed under "one country two systems" principle, introduced by Deng Xiaoping. In terms of sovereignty the relationship between the mainland China and Hong Kong can be considered as quite unique situation in world politics: even though the sovereignty over the SAR was transferred to the PRC in 1997, Hong Kong retained its economic system, currency and legal system, it is quite independent in managing of its international and spiritual affairs (for example unlike the PRC Hong Kong Catholic bishops are appointed by Vatican, not Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association) and even visa is required to pass between the PRC and Hong Kong border. Moreover, protests of 2014 against proposed reforms to the electoral system of the SAR demonstrated that Hong Kong can challenge PRC attempts to change this status-quo. Therefore, it is quite interesting to look how the PRC top leadership frames "sovereignty" when communicating with compatriots in Hong Kong. The main themes that can be traced in this speech are the following:

4.1 *Sovereignty as prerequisite for development.* In the speech the president primarily focuses on "one country, two systems" principle and conditions for its further smooth implementation. And here president Xi links the future success of Hong Kong with its adherence to the principle and the idea of safeguarding of national sovereignty: "At present, the practice of "one country, two systems" in Hong Kong has encountered some new situations and new problems. Hong Kong's system of safeguarding national sovereignty, security, and development

interests (维护国家主权、安全、发展利益的制度) needs to be improved... to meet the expectation of Hong Kong people for a better life and advance Hong Kong's development in all sectors we must stay on the right and steady course, gain a full understanding of the policy of "one country, two systems" and faithfully implement it" (Xi Jinping, 2017). So here we can observe logical circle: upholding of "national sovereignty" provides success for "one country, two systems" which in term assures successful development of Hong Kong society. Sovereignty is seen as one of the crucial elements of the success.

4.2 *Sovereignty as condition for national unity.* Xi reminds that "the concept of "one country, two systems" was adopted, first and foremost, to achieve and maintain national unity. That is why in the negotiations with the United Kingdom, we made it absolutely clear *that sovereignty is not for negotiation* (主权问题不容讨论). Now that Hong Kong has returned to China, it is even more important for us *to firmly uphold China's sovereignty, security and development interests*» (Xi Jinping, 2017). Issue of national unification is one of the most serious for the PRC and here we can see how Chinese political leader is attempting to rebuild national unity of the country through the political discourse. Linking the future of Hong Kong with its past the president uses the phrase "*sovereignty is not for negotiation*" making reference to this Deng Xiaoping's famous phrase, that he said during preliminary discussion of Hong Kong handover with Margaret Thatcher in 1982 (Deng Xiaoping, 1993).

4.3 *Challenging national sovereignty is "crossing the line".* In his speech Xi Jinping also sends a clear warning to those who may attempt to challenge the PRC sovereignty over Hong Kong: "Any activity that endangers China's sovereignty and security, challenges the power of the central government and the authority of the Basic Law of the HKSAR or use Hong Kong to carry out infiltration and sabotage activities against the mainland is an act *that crosses the line* (触碰底线), and must not be allowed» (Xi Jinping, 2017).

4.4 *Sovereignty as advantage.* Finally, Xi Jinping links survival of Hong Kong with safeguarding of China's national sovereignty: "Development is the foundation of Hong Kong and the golden key to solving various problems. The purpose of the "one country, two systems" concept is to *restore sovereignty over Hong Kong* in a peaceful manner, and *to promote Hong Kong's development and maintain Hong Kong's status* as an international financial, shipping and trading center» (Xi Jinping, 2017). Xi stresses that it is impossible to reach all these goals without strong support form the PRC, and metaphors PRC's sovereignty over *Hong Kong* as *unique advantage*: "Hong Kong enjoys *the backing of the motherland* (香港背靠祖国) and is open to the world. Therefore it has many favourable development conditions and unique competitive advantages. In particular, sustainable and rapid development of the country in these

years has provided an invaluable opportunity, inexhaustible driving force and broad space for Hong Kong's development” (Xi Jinping, 2017).

Summing up it is possible to say that in this speech Xi Jinping linked safeguarding of national sovereignty and development of Hong Kong, and presented Chia's sovereignty over the SAR as prerequisite for its successful future. It is important to mention, that even though the theme of the speech was quite specific, if we look at other speeches delivered by president Xi we can easily see, that even though the theme and focus of the speeches are quite different, the main themes, related to sovereignty are rather similar. For example if we briefly look at the speech that was delivered by Xi at the celebration of the 90th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese People's Liberation Army on August 1, 2017 we can observe that again national sovereignty is presented as prerequisite *for survival and development*: “PLA safeguards national sovereignty, security, and development interests, and *maintains an important strategic opportunity for China's development*” (Xi Jinping: Zai qingzhu Zhongguo.... 2017). Xi also stresses that China stands strong on national unity and will not tolerate any challenge to its sovereignty: “We will never allow anyone, any organization, any political party, at any time, in any form, to split any piece of Chinese territory from China. No one should expect us *to swallow the bitter fruit that harms our sovereignty, security, and development interests*” (吞下损害我国主权、安全、发展利益的苦果) (Xi Jinping: Zai qingzhu Zhongguo... 2017). Therefore “securitization” of sovereignty is quite common for the Chinese official discourse.

Now let's try to summarize some preliminary results by collecting the models of symbolic representations of sovereignty in a Table 1 and subjecting it to comparative analysis:

Table 1. Correlation of symbolic representations of sovereignty in the speeches of the four leaders

Emmanuel Macron: speech of the French President to the deputies of the European Parliament delivered on April 17, 2018		Comparing with the speech of D.Trump	Comparing with the speech of V.Putin	Comparing with the speech of Xi Jinping
1.1	Sovereignty as a construction that protects against (external and internal) challenges	+	+	+
1.2	Sovereignty as “a symbol of the unity of Europe	+	+	+
1.3	Economic and commercial sovereignty	+	+	-
1.4	The Climate sovereignty	-	-	-
1.5	The Energy sovereignty	+	+	-
1.6	Sovereignty in the field of health and nutrition	-	-	-
1.7	Digital sovereignty	-	-	-
1.8	The sovereignty of a socially oriented Europe	-	-	-
1.9	Sovereignty as a revival	+	+	+

1.10	Disassociation of European sovereignty from the sovereignty of authoritarian states	+	+	-
Donald Trump: speech of the American President in the United Nations on September 25, 2018		Comparing with the speech of E.Macron	Comparing with the speech of V.Putin	Comparing with the speech of Xi Jinping
2.1	We ask you to honour our sovereignty	+	+	+
2.2	Our opponents are those who do not respect the rights of sovereign nations	+	+	+
2.3	Sovereignty as another significant step forward	-	-	-
2.4	We will never give up (America's) sovereignty in front of an unaccountable global bureaucracy	-	+	+
2.5	The (US) energy sovereignty as security and independence for themselves and their allies	+	+	-
2.6	Sovereignty as the protection of national security in the form of control over migration and foreign investment	-	+	-
2.7	Standing up for "independence, their security, and their sovereignty"	+	+	+
2.8	Sovereignty as a space of freedom, democracy and peace	-	+	+
Vladimir Putin: Address of the President of the Russian Federation in front of the Federal Assembly on December 4, 2014.		Comparing with the speech of E.Macron	Comparing with the speech of D.Trump	Comparing with the speech of Xi Jinping
3.1	Sovereignty as a strong and cohesive state, able to protect its compatriots	+	+	+
3.2	Willingness to recognize the sovereignty of countries as public good	+	+	+
3.3	The formula of "sovereign law".	+	+	+
3.4	Sovereignty as the ability to maintain the moral pride, dignity and condition of survival/existence	+	+	+
3.5	The idea of preserving national identity and state sovereignty through transnational integration	+	+	+
Xi Jinping. Speech delivered at the 20th Anniversary of Hong Kong's Return to China and the Inauguration Ceremony of the Fifth Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on June 1, 2017		Comparing with the speech of E.Macron	Comparing with the speech of D.Trump	Comparing with the speech of V.Putin
4.1	Sovereignty as prerequisite for development	+	+	+
4.2	Sovereignty as condition for national unity	+	+	+
4.3	Challenging national sovereignty is «crossing the line»	+	+	+
4.4	Sovereignty as advantage	+	+	+

Concluding our research we shall discuss results of exploration of the performative nature of sovereignty in a comparative empirical perspective. We have taken four well-known speeches on sovereignty to look which symbolic representations of sovereignty were enacted in the specific discourse of the four presidents – France, the United States of America, Russia and China. In the analysed symbolic representations of sovereignty we encountered important differences. For example, Russian president places greater emphasis on a “strong state,” the French leader focuses on “maintaining the Paris Agreement on climate protection,” the US president is clearly struck by geopolitical issues of “sovereignty” in the significant for the United States region of Middle East. For China “sovereignty” is the prerequisite for the survival of the nation. Also we need to consider that in four cases, we deal with different cultural contexts and different speech addressee. At the same time, we see that symbolic representations of “sovereignty”, with the help of which politicians speak on behalf of the people, largely coincided. Based on the comparative analysis (see Table 1.) we have synthesized together and selected ten symbolic representations of sovereignty that are common to all four examined discourses and tend to repeat themselves. We display them below in Table 2.:

Table 2. Symbolic representations of sovereignty shared by all four speeches

<p>1.1 Sovereignty as a construction that protects against (external and internal) challenges</p> <p>1.2 Sovereignty as a symbol of the unity of Europe</p> <p>1.9 Sovereignty as a European revival</p> <p>2.2 Our opponents are those who do not respect the rights of sovereign nations</p> <p>2.7 Standing up for independence, their security, and their sovereignty</p> <p>2.8 Sovereignty as a space of freedom, democracy and peace</p> <p>3.1. Sovereignty as a strong and cohesive state, able to protect its compatriots</p> <p>3.4. Sovereignty as the ability to maintain the moral pride, dignity and condition of survival/existence</p> <p>3.5. Preserving national identity and state sovereignty through transnational integration</p> <p>4.3 Challenging national sovereignty is «crossing the line»</p>

All these symbolic representations fit well into the definition of sovereignty by M.Friedeen, who described sovereignty in the form of a container serving as a justification for privatizing social and cultural space. As we can see, the above-mentioned ten symbolic representations of sovereignty can be attributed to almost each of four selected cases. The only way they will necessarily differ is the national language in which they are reproduced and the contextual replacement of a particular “friend” or “an enemy”. At least, at the level of discourse, we see that President E.Macron actually speaks about the similar model of sovereign France in Europe as President V.Putin does in relation to the Russian Federation within the Eurasian Union. In the same way for president D.Trump American interests “come first” as for the leader of the Peoples’ Republic of China Xi Jinping Chinese sovereignty as prerequisite for his country

successful development. Of course, at the discourse level, these types of “sovereignty” have their own specificity, however they perfectly fit into the discovered modes of representations. We can therefore suggest that usage of symbolic representations of sovereignty close in form and content allows different national actors to construct (and justify) different existing constellations of their political “friends” and “enemies”. What, in fact, comes to the fore is the factor of political identifications of the authors of the discourse and their addressee. Opponents of the “great” sovereign nations may turn out to be such countries as, for example, Iran, Russia, the United States, or accordingly their partners – Israel, India, China, the United Kingdom etc. In other words, the division into “enemies” and “friends” does not follow from different understandings of “sovereignty” that could be elicited from the empirical discourse analysis of texts. It rather turns out to be built in through other factors that are hidden or not directly declared – idea that, perhaps, for someone can sound as a neoschmittian take on the nature “sovereignty”.

In this respect, we can pose questions: what can be these latent factors? If the symbolic representations of sovereignty are considered so similar, there must be something to which politicians appeal in order to give credibility to particular interpretations of sovereignty in different countries; so, what is it? Finally, why do performative practices of sovereignty become so mobilizing for their recipients?

For the time being it can be assumed that resonance arises not only from the use of specific symbolic representations of sovereignty, but precisely at the moment of their imposition on certain existential contours (figurations) of collective identification. By existential contours of collective identification we mean what Brent J. Steele called an ontological security and described as an anxiety which consumes all social agents and motivates them to secure their sense of being (See Steele, 2008). Here symptomatic can be president V. Putin’s notion that real state sovereignty is an absolutely necessary condition for the existence of Russia: “If for some European countries national pride is a long-forgotten concept and sovereignty is too much of a luxury, true sovereignty for Russia is absolutely necessary for survival. Primarily, we should realise this as a nation. I would like to emphasise this: either we remain a sovereign nation, or we dissolve without a trace and lose our identity” (Putin 2014). This logic limits the choice to “either we have sovereignty, or – we lose our selves, our identity”, in other words: “either sovereignty and life” or “the loss of sovereignty and death”. Here the performative power of the rhetoric of “our sovereignty” can be contained in a public promise and official proclamation of collective immortality. A faithful conviction suggests that by gaining sovereignty the community and its members are reviving their moral pride and dignity (see symbolic representation 3.4 in a Table 2.). This fits into research of routes of nationalism outlined by the American historian Gopal Balakrishnan. In his works Balakrishnan emphasized the sacredness of the imagination of

the nation and its proximity to the nature of religion. Moreover, the scientist indicates the condition under which nationalism reveals particularly deep roots in the daily life of modern society. This is a constant political struggle within which the idea of a nation fully captures social imagination. According to Balakrishnan the power of national identification is capable of repeatedly increasing and reviving its power within the context of militarization of the community. Simultaneously this is likely to cause “Othering” and “alienation”. Moreover, when it comes to the question of survival, even a very close ally can suddenly become a potential “offender”. Symbolic representations of sovereignty, in our view, may demonstrate the mechanism previously described by Balakrishnan (Balakrishnan 2002, 274). For example, in November 2018, while answering the question “about unpleasant tweets” of US President Donald Trump, French President Emmanuel Macron, addressing fellow Europeans, said: “The United States is our historical ally, but being an ally does not mean being a vassal, we depend on them ... I believe in European sovereignty ... As president, I can put the question like this: do I want to hand all our security into the hands of the United States? No ... My responsibility is to protect you” (Le sain débat sur une armée européenne... 2018).

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