Russian Foreign Policy Discourse
During and After the Georgian War:
Representations of NATO

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Abstract

The study analyzes Russian foreign policy discourse on NATO during and after the Georgian war as constructed in on-line news articles from the state-run RIA Novosti news agency. The thesis adopts constructivist and discourse analytical approach. Namely, it is based on the interplay between the three main theoretical pillars: language as constitutive part of social reality; media as a type of discourse; and the constructivist understanding of the foreign policy discourse as being embedded in the domestic social and cultural dimensions.

The research has shown that the discourse on NATO constructed in the news articles of Ria Novosti to a great extent reflected the official Russian government’s discourse. The overall unfavorable representation of the organization was evident throughout the analyzed material. This ‘negative-other representation’ served to establish political frontiers between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ of the discourse. In the context of the Georgian war, the questions of the future power balance as well as effective transatlantic security mechanism gained particular prominence. The geopolitics of the regional security was represented as bipolar, comprising NATO (or ‘the West’ in its broad sense) on the one hand and Russia as the legitimate leader in most of the post-Soviet space, on the other. Such representation tended to possess distinctive features of the Cold War discourse.
**List of abbreviations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>critical discourse analysis</td>
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<td>DA</td>
<td>discourse analysis</td>
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<td>IR</td>
<td>International Relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>the North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<td>NRC</td>
<td>NATO-Russia Council</td>
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<td>PfP</td>
<td>the Partnership for Peace</td>
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<td>PJC</td>
<td>The NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>the United Nations Organization</td>
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<td>USA</td>
<td>the United States of America</td>
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Introduction

The period of history between the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the 1990s is known as the Cold War. Put simply, it was characterized by high antagonism between ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ blocs in a clearly bipolar world, with Moscow and Washington as the respective centers of the two rival camps. Two collective security military alliances were created with the goal to counteract one another: the Warsaw Pact and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), drawing a clear division between the two blocs. This situation ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union which left the United States the only superpower.

A distinctive feature of the antagonism between Moscow and Washington during the Cold War was that, despite several bad crises in the relationship between the two blocs, no direct military conflict arose. Instead, there was a constant rivalry in weapons development, technological advance and, importantly, ideological propaganda on both sides, ‘behind’ the closed borders. While the image of the communist bloc countries was built up as of ‘Red Scare’, the anti-communist bloc was depicted as imperialist power, driven by military-industrial interests (Wasburn and Burke 1997: 670). Issues tended to be framed in terms of a ‘dichotomized world of Communist and anti-Communist powers, with gains and losses allocated to contesting ideas, and rooting for ‘our side’ was considered entirely legitimate news practice’ (Herman and Chomsky 1988: 30-31, cited in Allan 2004: 45).

Thus, in the absence of a concrete battlefield, the ideological dimension gained a particular importance for the Cold War. For both Eastern and Western blocs, the perceived security threat was not limited to the military danger but also included the ideological one.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s-early 1990s, the ideologically bipolar world ceased to exist. The Warsaw Pact was officially dissolved in 1991. In the absence of its direct antagonist the NATO, however, not only stayed in the international arena, but also managed to develop by ‘redefining its orientation’ (Spinant 2000: 7).

Official bilateral cooperation between NATO member states and the Russian Federation was established in 1997 with NATO-Russia Founding Act, based on an ‘enduring political commitment undertaken at the highest political level, will build together a lasting and
inclusive peace in the Euro-Atlantic area on the principles of democracy and cooperative security’ (NATO relations with Russia). Yet, the relationship of cooperation has been often affected by political differences remaining on some high-level issues such as NATO geographical expansion, differences over the Kosovo and Georgian crises.

The couple of decennia which have passed since the dismissal of the Soviet Union are a relatively short amount of time. Therefore, considering that the original raison d’être of the NATO - to counteract the Soviet bloc – is no longer valid, it is interesting to see how the way the organization is perceived in contemporary Russia has also changed. Does the Russian contemporary foreign policy discourse represent NATO as a partner organization, or does it still possess features of a continued Cold War discourse?

The general aim of the present work is to analyze contemporary Russian foreign policy discourse on NATO during and after the Georgian war. To this aim, the study will conduct a discourse analysis of the Russian News agency Ria Novosti’s news articles published during the period of July 2008 to June 2009.

The potential contribution of this thesis to the study of the Russian foreign policy lies in its shift in the analysis of the NATO-Russia relations through the adoption of the discursive framework. It is expected that such a shift in the analysis will allow for the consideration of importance of language and fundamental concepts and beliefs which traditional foreign policy analysis scholarship tends to overlook (Larsen 1997: 1). The discursive framework will allow for establishing a correspondence between the discourse dimension and the underpinning practices of the Russian foreign policy and thus bring new insights into understanding of NATO-Russia relations.
Part I: points of departure

1. Study aims and context

1.1. Research questions and data collection

1.1.1. Research questions

The general research question can be formulated as follows:

*How was a certain representation of NATO and its relations with Russia discursively constructed in the news articles of the Russian state news agency RIA Novosti?*

This research question can be broken down into several sub-questions:

- What kind of representations of NATO and its role in the Georgian crisis were constructed in the Russian news?
- How were the relations between Russia and NATO represented in the Russian foreign policy discourse?
- Did the Russian discourse on NATO draw on the Cold War ideas and stereotypes?

The first sub-question, 'What kind of discourse on NATO and its role in the Georgian crisis was constructed in the Russian news?', seeks to explore the mosaic of representations of NATO in the Russian news texts. Analyzed separately each ‘piece of mosaic’ brings a new aspect into the organization’s perception, while combined together they give a generalized overview of how the discourse on NATO is constructed. In particular, the following questions will be addressed here: Did the representations of NATO form an overall positive or negative representation of the organization? Was NATO mostly portrayed as a rival or as a partner for Russia? Was NATO primarily seen as a unified political entity or as a complex sum of different political actors?
The second sub-question is ‘How were the relations between Russia and NATO represented in the Russian foreign policy discourse?’ While the main focus of the study is the representations of NATO per se, they are expected to be affected by a particular historical and political context. The context for this analysis is the organization’s relations with Russia (since it is the Russian news which is analyzed) during and after the Georgian conflict. Moreover, representations of Russian position itself are also expected to play a role in the analysis. Pietikäinen states that ‘[d]ifference is a counterpart to identity because constructing identity means inevitably constructing difference, too’ (Pietikäinen 2000: 21). Therefore, it is expected that representations of both NATO and Russia will be constructed simultaneously.

Finally, the third sub-question is ‘Does the NATO image draw on the Cold War ideas and stereotypes?’ The main goal here is to determine whether the Russian contemporary discourse on NATO during and after the Georgian crisis bears any elements of that of the Cold War, such as implicit assumptions or explicit references to the past bipolar confrontation between ‘the East’ and ‘the West’.

1.1.2. Data collection

Source choice

News agency Ria Novosti is a leading multi-media state-run information agency in Russia. The total monthly audience of the agency’s websites exceeds 7 million visitors. Its website www.rian.ru is one of the most visited news resources in the Russian language internet space. Moreover, Ria Novosti is also the most frequently cited information source on Russia, both among Russian- and non-Russian media worldwide. The news articles produced by the agency are also distributed throughout major national newspapers (Ria Novosti).

Ria Novosti was selected as a source of items for analysis here because of its nation-wide coverage in Russia and the popularity among Russian-speaking public. Moreover, as it will be discussed in the following chapters, it is expected to provide relevant material for the analysis of the foreign policy discourse on NATO in Russia.

1 http://www.rian.ru/docs/about/index.html
Language choice

Although the agency provides online news in several languages, including English, Russian was selected as the language for analysis. Even though this required consequent partial translation of the material into English (for the purpose of exemplifying findings), this choice was made for important considerations discussed below.

Firstly, Russian is the primary language used by Ria Novosti, in which original news items are produced. Although some articles are further translated into other languages to reach the non-Russian speaking public, the translation is done selectively. In the process of data language selection of this research, search results for the word ‘NATO’ were compared on English and Russian versions of the website. The outcome showed a considerably bigger amount (approximately twice as many) of matches in Russian. Moreover, when the English counterparts did exist, they were considerably shorter than the original articles: descriptions and important details were often omitted. The latter are of great importance for the present analysis, since they provide more data for analysis.

Secondly, the articles produced in Russian, are primarily read by the Russian population. On the contrary, information produced in other languages is targeted at the foreign audience and, as a result, may differ from the original texts. Since it is the foreign policy discourse in Russia which is the focus of this research, the choice was made for the original language of the news articles.

Selection criteria

This study will provide analysis of news articles dated between July 1, 2008 and June 27, 2009 from the Russian leading news agency RIA Novosti whose archives are publicly available on the internet. The data includes coverage of issues related to NATO during and after the War in Georgia (articles dated July 2008 were also included in order to accommodate the forerun to the Georgian crisis in August 2008; the last date included in the analysis marks the moment when the meetings of NRC were resumed in June 2009).
The analysis was made from a total of 37 articles available on the Ria Novosti website. The general key word ‘NATO’ was used in the search field of the archive to identify relevant articles. As a result, 3556 articles were found. Due to the extensive amount of material, it became necessary to limit the search. This was done by selecting only the ‘analytics and commentary’ category of articles in the ‘advanced search options’. Thus, pure news reports, as well as other categories such as ‘sport’, ‘online conferences’ or ‘interviews’ were excluded from search. While other categories were less relevant for the present research, the pure news reports were excluded since their main aim is to provide factual information and they tend to avoid comments. On the contrary, the primary goal of the articles found in the ‘analytics and commentary’ is to debate and problematize issues. Therefore, they were regarded as a more useful and relevant material for the present analysis. Further, among the articles identified in this way, only those containing the word ‘NATO’ in their subject line and therefore primarily focusing on issues relevant to this study were selected. Besides, the correlation between the headline and the news story itself was made to check if the wording of the headline corresponded to the content of the news item. As a result, the items included in the analysis tended to be long, extended articles consisting of 700-800 words on average. Finally, the original news articles were assembled in a single text body for the sake of further analysis.

1.2. Study context

1.1.1. Relations between NATO and the Russian Federation

Almost half a century which followed the end of the Second World War was characterized by high antagonism between ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ blocs. To this end two opposing military alliances were created. Firstly, NATO was founded in 1949 to comprise the United States of America (USA), Canada, and Western European capitalist countries. In the words of the organization’s first Secretary General, Lord Ismay, the organization’s goal was ‘to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down’ (Reynolds 1994: 13). Following the initiative of the Soviet Union Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance
which is commonly known as the Warsaw Pact, was created in 1955 in order to counteract NATO. The period of almost half a century which followed these developments received the name of the Cold War’.

The term ‘Cold War’ refers to the fact that there was not direct military clash between the Eastern and the Western blocs (Ibid: 18). The war, instead, manifested itself in terms of political conflict, arms proliferation and economic competition. Closed border defenses in Europe clearly marked the division line between the two camps and were referred to as ‘Iron Curtain’ (Ibid: 19).

Ideological war was a notable feature of that period, with intensive propaganda building up threat images on both sides of the ‘Iron Curtain’. In the West, the communist bloc was commonly presented as ‘Red Scare’, while the Soviet propaganda depicted the anti-communist bloc as imperialist power, driven by military-industrial interests (Wasburn and Burke 1997:670). With regards to media, it followed the general trend of consistency with governmental agendas in both camps (Robinson, Brown, Goddard and Parry 2005: 951). Issues tended to be framed in terms of a ‘dichotomized world of Communist and anti-Communist powers, with gains and losses allocated to contesting ideas, and rooting for ‘our side’ was considered entirely legitimate news practice’(Herman and Chomsky 1988: 30-31, cited in Allan 2004: 45).

The balance of power in the world radically changed in the late 1980s-early 1990s with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Many newly independent countries appeared on the European map while Russia became legal but not ideological successor of the Soviet Union. Thus, the ideologically bipolar world ceased to exist after the dissolution of the Soviet bloc. The very reason for NATO’s existence – to resist the Eastern bloc – disappeared. Yet, instead of dissolving, the bloc stayed alive and gradually outgrew its original function of collective defense. Today’s NATO is active far beyond the North Atlantic geographic area; in addition it has expanded its mandate which is no longer limited to military threats only but also involves economic, political, social, environmental and human rights aspects arising in the context of globalization (Spinant 2000: 5) Moreover, some of the former ‘Communist bloc’ countries have ‘changed their orientation’ and joined the NATO in three rounds of
enlargement in 1999, 2004 and 2009 (NATO). Furthermore, more European countries have expressed aspirations to join NATO.

Following the end of the Cold War, a forum for consultation with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe was created. In the context of this forum, the first formal contacts between Russia and NATO began and were deepened when Russia joined the Partnership for Peace (PfP) in 1994. The next step took place in 1997, when Russia’s relationship with NATO was outlined in the ‘NATO-Russia founding act’ which later led to the creation of the Permanent Joint Council (PJC) (NATO). In 2002, the PJC was replaced by the NATO-Russia Council (NRC).

Overall, the relationship between NATO and Russia followed the path of ups and downs throughout the past couple of decennia. Stable cooperation has been achieved in such key areas as combating terrorism, land transit for the International Security Assistance force granted by Russia, theatre missile defense, etc. The official ties where suspended in 1999 when Russia condemned the NATO Kosovo air campaign, but resumed a few months later, with Russian peacekeepers deploying as part of the NATO-led peacekeeping force in Kosovo (NATO).

The most recent and, arguably, the most severe crisis in relationship between Russia and NATO took place in August 2008 when Russia and Georgian went to war over the separatist region of South Ossetia. On August 7 Georgia launched bombardment and ground attack on South Ossetia. Russia sent troops to South Ossetia and some to Georgia. There is no agreement on which of these actions happened first: Russia and Georgia both claimed to be responding to aggression (Smith 2008: 12). NATO called condemned Russian intervention calling it ‘disproportionate military action’ (NATO). As a result, meetings of NRC were suspended. Shortly after, Russia proclaimed its official recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions as independent states. In response, the Secretary General condemned this act as a ‘direct violation of numerous United Nations (UN) Security Council resolutions regarding Georgia’s territorial integrity, resolutions that Russia itself had endorsed’ (Statement by the Secretary General of NATO on the

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Russian recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia). This dispute remains unresolved up to date.

Besides human casualties, the short Georgian war has had serious consequences for NATO-Russia relations and, by extension, for the regional security system in Europe.

Firstly, the question of the alliance’s collective defense mechanism came in the highlight of the debate. Georgia was not a member state of NATO at the moment of the conflict. Consequently, it did not require NATO to invoke Article 5 of the NATO Treaty (which states that all members should come to defense in case one of them is under attack). Yet, many countries in Central and Eastern Europe stressed that the West’s response to the crisis as ‘tепid, leaving more than a few members anxiously looking over their shoulders’ (Smith 2008: 13). For instance, shortly after the conflict, Poland announced that it would accept the United States’ initiative to set up missile defense system on its territory (Ibid.), which was opposed by Russia.

Moreover, the conflict between Russia and NATO also brought a new perspective into the question of the future enlargement of the organization. NATO’s enlargement through Eastern European states has always been fiercely opposed by Russia (Zevelev 2000: 2). Arguably, the Georgian conflict made the question of Georgian membership in the near future more problematic since states with unresolved territorial conflict cannot join NATO.

The time period included in this study covers Georgian war and the time after, until the work of the NRC formally resumed its work in Corfu on June 27, 2009. It is worth stating that since this time, the relations have shown a tendency toward improvement. At the last formal meeting of the NRC on December 4, 2009, the chairman Anders Fogh Rasmussen announced the goal ‘to build a true strategic partnership between NATO and Russia, based on trust, shared views and shared goals’ (NATO news³).

1.1.2. Mass Media in Russia

In the Soviet Union, the relationship between the state and mass media was vertical meaning that the latter was owned and fully controlled by the government. Mass media

were used to strengthen the impact of the ruling communist ideology and contribute to regime stability (Muižnieks 2008: 10).

After the break-up of the Soviet Union the situation changed significantly: universal state ownership ceased and the media had to adjust to function according to market principles. Moreover, Gorbachev’s Glasnost policy ascribed an important role to mass media. As a result, democratic media system began to emerge during this time; this process continued under Russia’s first President, Boris Yeltsin (Becker 2004: 140). However, the year 1996 can be seen as the turning point towards the state control, marked by the tendency of a merger between the mass media and political power (Muižnieks 2008: 13-14). The freedom of press is said to have become worse after Vladimir Putin became the President in 2000, with the Russian state increasingly interfering with the media autonomy (Becker 2004: 147).

Current informational behavior in Russia has been pointed out as a ‘constant worry’ by many media professionals, including foreign journalists and press monitoring organizations (Smaele 2007: 1299). Independence of Russian media is affected by direct and indirect control by the government and affiliated with it major private companies. Russia is criticized for the lack of pluralism, journalist persecution and censorship (BBC Country Profile: Russia). In 2009 ‘Reporters without Borders’ ranked Russia 153th out of 175 in the Press Freedom Index (Press Freedom Index 2009). Moreover, according to these rankings, the general trend in the country has shown negative tendency in the recent years. Becker describes Russian mass media system as belonging to neo-authoritarian type, based on the following characteristics: access to media, ownership structures, appointment of personnel, relative autonomy from the state, negative and positive control of press content, pluralism, the role of ideology and legal protections (Becker 2004: 145). While the situation in general is considerably better than during the Soviet time and certain extent of pluralism is tolerated in Russia, there are limits, particularly on issues that are of central importance to the regime, such as national security and elections (Seaton and Pimlot 1980, cited in Becker 2004: 149).

Two out of three Russian news agencies, including Ria Novosti, are state-owned (BBC Country Profile: Russia). This fact is an important factor for consideration in the present thesis since one of the key preconditions for press freedom is the press’s freedom from the
state or, more specifically, ‘the press’s relative autonomy from the state’ (Becker 2004: 147).

Mandel further argues that, in the Russian context, ‘state ownership means state (as opposed to public) media – there is neither a tradition of public service broadcasting nor a mechanism to ensure a relative autonomy of broadcast media from the state, as is the case in the many older public broadcasting systems most often associated with Europe’ (Mandel 1999, cited in Becker 2004: 152).

1.2.3. Previous research

Relations between NATO and the Russian Federation occupy an important place in the international security and have drawn considerable attention in the scientific scholarship.

However, in contrast to the present thesis, most research was conducted in the form of rationalist geostrategic studies, document and policy analysis etc.

For instance, Black (2000) provides a study of NATO enlargement in terms of geopolitical analysis. He suggests that Russia, a weakened former superpower, is facing isolation is the transatlantic security framework. As a result, it is forced to turn to new strategic partners such as China, Iran and Iraq. Writing in the year 2000, Black suggests that Kosovo secessionism is likely to cause a precedent for Transcaucasia and the Caspian region.

Julian Smith in ‘The NATO-Russia relationship: defining moment or déjà vu?’ (2008), deals with a detailed analysis of the relations between the two parties since the breakup of the Soviet Union up till the war in Georgia and the consequent crisis in the relations. She does so by considering political and economic and social factors in both domestic and international field which influenced the cooperation at every stage of its development. Thus, Smith manages to provide a wider context for evaluating the relationship crisis between NATO and Russia as well as suggest a forecast for the future. She argues that neither Russia nor the West can afford a long-term disengagement due to the international security challenges. She therefore suggests that the two sides should turn their attention to common threats such as Iran nuclear plans, the situation Afghanistan as well as non-traditional ones, e.g. energy security, climate change or global health.

Rasizade provides a comprehensive account of the events of Georgian War as well as underlying interests and motives of different stakeholders. He further draws a parallel
between Abkhazia and South Ossetia and other separatist territories in the post-Soviet space such as Transdniestria, Nagorno-Karabakh and the Crimea. He suggests that the War in Georgia signifies the come-back of the strong Russia and regards it as ‘Russian revanchism’ and the attempt ‘to regather its historic parts severed after 1991 collapse and sudden disintegration of the USSR’ (Rasizade 2009: 11).

One of the studies which shares in common with the present thesis, is ‘Russian political language and public opinion on the West, NATO and Chechnya’ by Charlotte Wagnsson (2000). In her book, Wagnsson conducts a qualitative content analysis of speeches delivered by Russian political leaders during 1992-1997. She further compares the outcomes with survey data on the Russian public opinion on the issues in question. Using the theoretical framework of securitization developed by the Copenhagen School, she concludes that Russian political language and attitudes towards NATO and the West underwent significant modifications during the 5-year long period examined. While the political leaders’ speeches tended to reflect pro-western dispositions in the aftermath of the Soviet breakup, this optimistic language later changed to emphasize geopolitical interests and national pride. The ghosts form the past reappeared, and NATO (especially the enlargement issue) and Chechnya were portrayed as a serious security threat.

Finally, Guillaume Colin (2004) analyzes press-conferences given during the Kosovo crisis by both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Communist Party in Russia. He argues that each of the two sides attempted to construct and impose its own version of the worldview. Grounding his study in the concept of myth and political imaginaire, Colin both narratives referred to two political identity myths, namely, Russia’s relations to the West and the memory of the Second World War. In the course of the domestic political struggle the two myths, however, gained different interpretation by the government and the opposition. On a more theoretical level, Colin argues for the need to distinguish foreign policy discourse from foreign policy per se and consider it in the context of domestic politics as well as political imaginaire.
2. Theoretical perspectives

2.1. Social Constructivism

For the purpose of analysis of the Russian foreign policy discourse on the NATO, the thesis will draw on such a relatively new approach in the international relations (IR) as social constructivism (or simply constructivism) as its general theoretical perspective.

Constructivism emerged in 1980s as part of a larger movement, the so called ‘third debate’, which is known as the attempt of the emerging post-positivist scholars to challenge the dominant IR theoretical schools of the time, namely neo-liberalism and neo-realism, on the grounds of their scientific methodology (Mansbach and Rafferty 2007: 31). Constructivists took a middle ground in the debate bridging the gap between positivists (who believed that truth is accessible through empirical tests) and post-positivists (who argued that there were no neutral, value-free tests of truth). According to constructivists, people act in the world according to their perceptions of it, while the ‘real’, objective world continuously shapes those perceptions (Mansbach and Rafferty 2007:34).

Since late 1980s constructivism grew into a well-established approach in the field of IR, and developed further to incorporate new issues and new embranchments resulting in an increasingly wide variety of views. There is a disagreement in the contemporary scholarship on whether constructivism is a meta-theoretical standpoint or a ‘full’ theoretical approach within IR (Carlsnaes 2002:331-339). Furthermore, constructivism in its present state has developed into a rather complex approach incorporating various sometimes conflicting perspectives. Due to the significant divisions among the present-day constructivists regarding important issues, they can be classified into many strands (Carlsnaes 2002: 331-332). Yet, they generally share a common ground for their understanding which can be briefly put as ‘the social construction of knowledge and the construction of social reality’ (Guzzini 2000:149, cited in Carlsnaes 2002:331).

According to Reus-Smit, constructivists generally share several theoretical propositions, as discussed below (Reus-Smit 2001: 216). Firstly, in contrast to rationalists, they view normative and ideational structures as equally important to material ones: ‘material resources only acquire meaning for human action through the structure of shared
knowledge in which they are embedded’ (Wendt 1995: 73, cited in Reus-Smit 2002: 217). Secondly, constructivists are interested in how these non-material structures shape actors’ identities since identities inform interests and, in turn, actions (Reus-Smit 2001: 217). This emphasis on identity formation differs from the rationalists’ approach which takes interests and identities as pre-given. Thirdly, constructivists understand agents and structures as mutually constituted (Ibid: 218). Thus, unlike rationalists, they shift the conceptual emphasis from the rationalist ‘structure’ to ‘the process of interaction.

The constructivist school is broadly divided in two strands: the ‘thinner’ (e.g. Wendt, Onuf, Katzenstein, Keohane, Krasner, Reus-Smit, Sikkink) and the ‘thicker’ (e.g. Adler, Hopf, Campbell, Waever, Buzan) versions (using different terminology, the ‘conventional’ constructivism and ‘the linguistic turn’ (Mansbach and Rafferty 2007: 172-173).

The known best advocate of the ‘thinner’ version was Alexander Wendt. The main theoretical postulates brought into the field by Wendt are, firstly, the importance of shared ideas and beliefs for IR and, secondly, their continuous change in the process of states’ interaction. In his famous article ‘Anarchy is What States Make of It: the Social Construction of Power Politics’ (Wendt 1992), Wendt refers to both neo-realist and neo-liberal schools as ‘rationalist’ and suggests they are limited to a fundamentally ‘behavioral’ approach, since they regard actors (states) as changing behavior but not being capable of changing their identities and interests. Wendt further suggests that ‘Structure has no existence or causal powers apart from process. Self-help and power politics are institutions, not essential features of anarchy. Anarchy is what states make of it’ (Wendt 1992: 395, original emphasis).

Thus, so far the following key concepts of constructivism have been discussed: identity, interaction and process. As Mansbach and Rafferty summarize it, ‘The subjects of international politics are not uniformly and universally rational egoists but have distinct identities shared by the cultural, social and political – as well as material – circumstances in which they are embedded. They are not static but ever evolving as they interact with each other and their environment’ (Mansbach and Rafferty 2007: 171). This argument presents the main ontological postulates of constructivism developed as a critique of the static assumptions of the rationalist IR theories. However, while suggesting a different ontology,
the ‘thinner’ version of constructivism relies on the rationalist positivist epistemology which includes hypothesis testing, causality and explanation (Ibid: 173).

In contrast to the ‘thinner’ version of constructivism, the ‘thicker’ version applies an interpretivist epistemology which, rests on the notion that ‘we cannot get behind our language to compare it with that which it describes’ (Wittgenstein 1958, cited in Mansbach and Rafferty 2007: 173). Thus, the ‘thick’ version of constructivism emphasizes the crucial role of language as inseparable from the objects of knowledge. This version suggests the inseparability between ontology and epistemology: if constructivism and positivism regard the nature of the ‘reality’ differently, then applying a positivist epistemology in a constructivist research is unreasonable (Ibid: 174). Thus, the main distinction between the ‘thinner’ and the ‘thicker’ versions of constructivism lies in the respectful recognition and denial of the existence of the objective world. However, as Kratochwil argues: ‘hardly anyone doubts that the ‘world’ exists ‘independent’ from our minds. The question is rather whether we can recognize it in a pure and direct fashion...or whether what we recognize is always already organized and formed by certain categorical and theoretical elements’ (Kratochwil 2000:91, cited in Mansbach and Rafferty: 174).

Since by opting for DA as a research method, this thesis accepts the view on the language as more than a transparent and value-free vehicle of communication, the ‘thicker’ version of constructivism provides interesting insights for the present work. Therefore, the following section will concentrate on some particular contributions of the ‘linguistic’ turn of constructivist and which this paper will adopt as its theoretical perspective.

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4 *Ontology* is concerned with the questions regarding the nature of social entities (i.e. whether they should be considered objective entities that have a reality external to social actors, or social constructions built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors). *Epistemology* is concerned with the question of whether the social world can and should be studied according to the same principles, procedures and ethos as the natural sciences (Bryman 2008: 12-18). These concepts will be discussed in a greater detail in the following chapter.
Theoretical points of departure

The present thesis draws on the theoretic interplay between the three main pillars this study is based upon: foreign policy as a social construct, language as a constitutive part of social reality and media as a type of discourse.

2.2. Foreign policy as a social construct

One of the best-known groups of scholars who contributed to the linguistic turn in constructivist inquiry was the so-called Copenhagen school (represented by such prominent authors as Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, Jaap de Wilde), who ascribe special importance to discourse as ‘characterizing the foreign policy domain as a powerful structural constraint, on a high level of generality, shaping the foreign policy of the state in question’ (Carlsnaes 2002: 341).

One of the main propositions by the Copenhagen scholars is the theory of ‘securitization’, by which they refer to the fact that for a political issue to become salient on the international level, it needs to be presented as ‘urgent and existential, as so important that it should not be exposed to the normal haggling of politics but should be dealt with decisively by top leaders prior to other issues’ (Buzan, Waever and de Wilde 1998: 29). Thus, in order to accomplish securitization, foreign policy makers need to present a certain issue as a threat to the public. The concept of securitization draws on linguistics: ‘...by saying the words, something is done [...] it is not interesting as a sign referring to something more real; it is the utterance itself that is the act (Ibid: 26). Moreover, according to the Copenhagen school, securitization is both socially constructed and intersubjective since it is determined by the interplay of the perceptions of involved actors and there is no ‘real security’ outside of the world of politics: ‘Security is thus a self-referential practice, because it is in this practice that the issue becomes a security issue –not necessarily because a real existential threat exists but because the issue is presented as such a threat (Ibid: 24).

Consequently, the Copenhagen School scholars share two important postulates of the ‘thick’ strand of constructivism, which will be adopted by this thesis. Firstly, they stress the importance and centrality of language and understand discourse as a social action. Secondly, they emphasize process oriented conception of security and the view on social reality as
constructed, deny threats as external and objectively defined, and call instead for the importance of the subjectivity and constructed perceptions.

Furthermore, according to the Copenhagen School, while some issues become successfully securitized, others do not; this depends on whether their presentation as a threat is accepted by the intended audience. If the latter rejects a ‘securitizing move’, political leaders may have to abandon it (Ibid: 25). Thus, securitization is negotiated between the securitizer and the audience and presupposes interplay between them through a ‘securitizing move’. On the international level, this implies close interdependence between foreign policy and domestic factors which underpin it. Guillaume Colin (2004) suggests a similar line of argument, stating that foreign policy discourse is a practice that belongs both to the field of international relations and the field of internal policy. This can be explained by the fact that the producer of this discourse has a dual role: while being a foreign policy-maker, s/he simultaneously is a domestic policy-maker because s/he needs to account for decisions made and actions undertaken internationally (Colin 2004: 5).

This thesis seeks to conduct analysis of Russian the foreign policy discourse targeted at the domestic audience (Russian-speaking public). Therefore, the understanding of foreign policy discourse as grounded not solely in the international field but also constrained by domestic factors, developed by the Copenhagen School, has important implication for the present work. Another aspect of the securitization framework which this thesis will draw upon is the central interest in discourse as a link between the international and the domestic issues.

Further, in ‘Identity, Migration and the Security Agenda in Europe’, Waever extends security analysis from one referent object - the state - to two - the state and society - and argues that to a state, survival is essentially a question of sovereignty; while for a nation, it is a question of identity (Waever 1998: 33). Thus, if collective identification is threatened, its protection may become part of a state’s security policy, ‘directing itself against foreign cultural elements and producing enemy images’ (Wagnsson 2008: 21). Such a shift in security perception introduces a link between the state identity and foreign policy. Moreover, in ‘DA as Foreign Policy Theory: the Case of Germany and Europe’ (1996, cited in Colin), Waever suggests that “Discourse is the dimension of society where meaning is
structured. It forms a system regulating what can be meaningfully said. The discursive space is the field in time and space sharing a discursive system. The system is a layered set of key concepts and constellations of concepts. At each layer, a particularly dense and powerful constellation is defined which we call a structure.” This implies that any foreign policy discourse is embedded in the cultural dimension. Thus, even if the same language is used to label certain concepts, they still might not have the same meaning in different cultures. Consequently, foreign policy discourse may help to reveal social values and ideas which are not apparent otherwise. Henrik Larsen puts forward a similar argument defining foreign policy discourse as ‘the framework of meaning within which foreign policy takes place’ (Larsen 1997: 453). Thus, discourse functions as both a background and a frame for what can be considered as an acceptable action. He further demonstrates his argument on empirical examples by suggesting differences in foreign policies of France and Britain (Larsen 1997) and Britain and Denmark (Larsen 1999) as a result of cultural differences in perceiving concepts, people and the role of the state.

David Cambell in his book ‘Writing Security’ also suggests interrelation between foreign (security) policy and the cultural context: ‘foreign policy, particularly in its modern form of ‘rational security policy’, is first and foremost a performative discourse constitutive of political order: after all securing something requires its differentiation, classification and definition. It has, in short, to be identified’ (Campbell 2005: 199). Elsewhere in the same book he defines foreign policy as a ‘political practice that makes foreign certain events and actors’ (Campbell 2005: 61).

Thus, this thesis will adopt the view on foreign policy discourse as a system of meanings embedded in a particular cultural context. Consequently, the expectation is that analysis of the Russian media discourse will shed light on the background cultural images and ideas which underpin it.

In the constructivist field, as mentioned before, there is no systematic ‘classification’ of various approaches and strands. Therefore, in the spirit of constructivism, it is not the objective of the current thesis to identify the most ‘righteous’ piece of theory for the
research. The thesis will thus draw instead on insights provided by different constructivist works. This section provided an overview of the particular concepts and theories which will be drawn upon in the present thesis. Firstly, this includes the fundamental constructivist view on the reality as socially constructed and therefore subjective. Secondly, the special attention will be paid to discourse as the ‘basis on which policy preferences, interests are constructed’ (Larsen 1999: 453). Finally, this thesis will adopt the proposition on the importance of identity for the state security, as well as simultaneous embeddedness of foreign policy discourse in both domestic and international contexts.

Thus, the first pillar of this research is the constructivist understanding of foreign/security policy discourse embedded in the social and cultural dimensions.

2.3. Discourse: language as a constitutive part of social reality

Since the study focuses on conducting DA (DA) of media, the second section will discuss how discourse and its analysis are understood in this thesis and what this understanding implies for conducting the research.

There are many conflicting and overlapping definitions of discourse and DA which range from on-going communication in a certain situation to a theoretical view of the study of language use in general. Even Foucault, one of the founders of the concept and up till date one of the most influential figures in the field, uses different understandings of discourse in his works. As he states: ‘Instead of gradually reducing the rather fluctuating meaning of the word ‘discourse’, I believe I have in fact added to its meanings: treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements’ (Foucault 2002: 80). Thus, discourse for Foucault can be understood on different levels of abstraction, ranging from a general theoretical realm of communication, to particular group of utterances. Consequently, depending on the definition of the term, its analysis can also be defined differently. On the one hand, it can be seen as a practical means of examining concrete texts. On the other hand, it can refer to the general theoretical perspective on discourse which considers language as more than a transparent means of communication and understands it as both constructing and constructed by the social world.
Therefore, DA is neither a single methodological or analytical framework nor a homogenous theoretical perspective but is a multi-faceted approach interested in the use of language in context (Pietikäinen 2000: 56).

This study intends to apply DA as its research method but it also adopts discourse as a broader theoretical frame. While DA as a research method will be examined in greater detail in the chapter dealing with methodology, this section will discuss discursive theoretical framework of the thesis.

The key theoretical postulate of DA is the understanding of discourse and social reality as interdependent which means and that it is impossible to draw a clear line between the two. While being a form of the social reality, discourse, in its turn, shapes it on various dimensions: discourse constitutes the objects of knowledge, social subjects and forms of ‘self’, social relationships and conceptual frameworks (Foucault 2002).

Naturally, foreign policy discourse may be regarded in these terms, too. As David Campbell puts it, foreign policy, ‘particularly in its modern form of ‘rational security policy’, is first and foremost a performative discourse constitutive of political order’ (Campbell 2005: 199).

Although there are different ways in approaching DA, there are some general points of departure shared by DA scholars. Gill (2000) suggests that DA generally can be viewed as comprising four main themes: discourse as a topic, constructive nature of language, discourse as a form of action and discourse as being rhetorically organized (Gill 2000, cited in Bryman 2008: 501). Each of the specified themes is considered in greater detail below.

Firstly, discourse is a topic. Therefore, according to Gill, discourse analytical approach implies that discourse is a focus of inquiry itself and not just a tool for discovering social reality behind it. Thus, language use itself presents interest for a discourse analytical study instead of being taken as a transparent reflection of the world. The second theme in DA is the constructive nature of discourse. This implies that through a discourse, a particular way of social reality is constructed. Moreover, the discourse producer chooses the most appropriate discourse from the options they have available and it reflects ‘the disposition of the person responsible for devising it’ (Bryman 2000: 501). In addition to constructing the
reality, however, language is also being constantly altered by the latter. According to
Fairclough, language is both socially shaped and socially shaping (Fairclough 1995: 55).
Thirdly, Gill suggests that discourse is a form of action ‘in its own right’: it is a way of
accomplishing acts, e.g. attributing blame, presenting oneself in a particular way, or getting
an argument across (Gill 2000: 175, cited in Bryman 2000: 501). This point can be seen as
interrelated as the previous two, both of which suggested that it is impossible to make a
clear division between discourse and reality. Fourthly, Gill argues that discourse is
rhetorically organized, which means that discourse is concerned with ‘establishing one
version of the world in the face of competing versions (Gill 2000: 276, cited in Bryman 2000:
501). This implies that ‘discourse’ is a collective concept, in other words, there are
simultaneously many discourses, overlapping and competing with each other. Each of these
discourses is a social and political construction which establishes a system of relations
between different objects and practices, while providing positions with which social agents
can identify (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000: 3). Some of them gain broader acceptance and
are perceived as the ‘truth’ (Lilja 2007: 24).

Consequently, a myriad of existing discourses is always in a state of struggle with each
other to acquire legitimacy and domination. Moreover, each discourse can be seen as an
attempt of (re)presenting the ‘true’ knowledge on a certain matter at a certain time. Such a
representation of knowledge is constrained by established practices and, at the same time,
can influence these practices. Consequently, the aspects of power and knowledge are
important underpinnings of a discourse. Their manifestation in discourses was one of the
main concerns in Foucault’s works: ‘It is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined
together’ (Foucault 1990a: 100). Howarth and Stavrakakis (2000) further argue that
discourses are concrete systems of social relations and practices which are intrinsically
political since they involve construction of antagonisms and establishing of political frontiers
between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’. Such a binary opposition between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is
necessary for the constitution of identities and therefore social objectivity itself. Put briefly,
‘[d]iscourses and the identities produced through them are inherently political entities that
involve the construction of antagonisms and the exercise of power’ (Howarth and
Stavrakakis 2000: 9).
However, if the reality is represented by many struggling discourses, each of them claiming to be the ‘truth’, this raises the question of whether it is possible at all to establish the difference between what is real and what is discursively constructed. For instance, Fairclough argues that discourse is a social reality in itself (Fairclough 1995: 55 cited in Lilja 2007: 23). Such an argument brings up the problematique of relativism: the question of whether reality exists outside of discourse or not. One of the common critiques of DA as both a theoretical approach and a research method is that it reduces everything to discourse e.g. ‘discourse is all there is’, ‘everything is language’ or ‘there is no reality’ (Campbell 1998: 6).

This work adopts the approach denying that the world comprises objects the existence of which is independent of ideas or beliefs about them. As Foucault argues, ‘A critique is not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out on what kind of assumptions, what kind of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices that we accept rest’ (Foucault 1990b: 154). Consequently, argument for dividing the world into the realm of ‘real’ as opposed to the one of images and ideas results in ‘the impossible attempt to step outside our skins – the traditions, linguistic and other, within which we do our thinking and self-criticism – and compare ourselves with something absolute’ (Rorty cited in Cambell 1998: 6).

Therefore, this thesis adopts the perspective that meanings, representations and physical objects could exist as such but they only gain meaning through discourse (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002: 202, cited in Lilja 2007: 24; Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000: 3; Cambell 1998: 6). Naturally, adaptation of such a standpoint will affect the empirical research: this study is not meant to examine and produce the objective account of the up-to-date state of the matters in the field. Instead, this thesis will offer a possible perspective on a particular instance of Russian foreign policy discourse, which implies that this analysis will be to a certain degree subjective.

*Thus, the second pillar of the present thesis is its discourse analytical and interpretative approach which acknowledges particular importance of language and its constitutive role in the construction of the social reality.*
2.4. **Media as a type of discourse**

This thesis will conduct DA of a major Russian state news agency Ria Novosti’s online publications. Therefore, it is worth considering the reasons for making this choice as well as the nature of news media discourse as such.

In contemporary mediated society, mass media plays a particularly important role by being not only a significantly important source of knowledge and information but also ‘one of the most important and influential public spaces of contemporary society’ (Pietikäinen 2000: 97).

News is seen as particularly important due to its commonly accepted status of an authoritative source of information, providing the reader with fresh facts and accurate accounts of recent events. Pietikäinen argues that media contents are thus generally perceived as an ‘impartial vehicle of facts’ (Pietikäinen 2000).

However, it will be suggested here that, contrary to the common perception, media is not neutral. Even considering just a few arguments such as e.g. author’s partiality, political and economic orientation of a specific medium, the commercial nature of the news industry, etc. makes it hard to advocate complete objectivity of media’s representation of the reality. Moreover, besides the possible bias caused by partiality in journalistic practices and policies of a particular medium, the objectivity of mass media representations can be questioned on the very foundational level. Media texts are meant to produce *accounts of* facts and events and thus play the role of representation and reflection of reality. Grossberg et alia argue that ‘representation involves making a claim on and about reality; but it is not the same as realism’ (Grossberg, Wartella and Whitney 1998: 179). Therefore, by choosing to cover some topics and not other, favoring particular ways and angles of their representing, and, thus, by seeing and thinking about one way of ‘truth’ over the other, media produce their own interpretation and in this way ‘construct’ the reality.

Among other things, media also contribute to producing and maintaining the sense of belonging to a particular group - of citizenship, identity or region (Pietikäinen 2000: 96). By portraying people as a sharing something in common and thus forming a social group, the media contribute to the construction of identity and drawing borders between members of
the society and the outsiders. Consequently, media largely operates in a given ideational background shared by a certain society. Donald Matheson introduces the concept of ‘news conventions’ which, according to him, define what is acceptable or not to be presented as the news. He identifies two types of conventions: the journalistic and the social ones. The journalistic conventions concern themselves with the conventional structure of the text, areas of interest and background knowledge of the readers. The social conventions refer to things commonly accepted in the society, such as word meaning, common sense understandings and power roles in the society (Matheson 2005: 16). Within the same line of argument, Hall introduces the idea of ‘cultural maps’: ‘[A]n event only ‘makes sense’ if it can be located within a range of known social and cultural identifications. If newsmen did not have available – in a routine way – such cultural ‘maps’ of the social world, they could not ‘make sense’ for their audiences of the unusual, unexpected and unpredicted events which form the basic content of what is ‘newsworthy’ (Hall 1978: 54, cited in Matheson 2005: 18). Thus, media practices are limited by what is considered as acceptable within a society and, subsequently, are situated in a particular socio-cultural context.

Such an understanding of relationship between media and the social reality, where the former reflects and (re)inforces power relations in the society, echoes constructivist view on interdependence between ideas and social life. Moreover, since language used in media texts is not neutral, news is regarded in this work as type of discourse. As Matheson states, ‘the news can only appear as a reflection of society, and can only make sense, if it adheres to a set of social norms and principles of discourse’ (Matheson 2005: 16).

Questioning the neutrality of the news from a different point of view, Stuart Allan in the book ‘News Culture’ discusses the ‘propaganda model’ developed by Herman and Chomsky. This model emphasizes the indispensable institutional bias and ideological framework of the production of news as truthful representation of reality (Allan 2004: 52). According to this view, the news media ‘permit – indeed, encourage – spirited debate, criticism and dissent, as long as these remain faithfully within the system of presuppositions and principles that constitute an elite consensus’ (Herman and Chomsky 1988: 302, Allan 2004: 53). Thus, aspects of power and ideology are important underpinnings of news practices and need to be accounted for in the news analysis.
This approach is important for consideration in the present study of the state-owned news agency’s articles. In this context, the particular relationship between the media and the state in Russia (discussed in the respective section) and its implications for the state media discourse. The news agency Ria Novosti is state owned, therefore, it is assumed in this study that its news production practices are influenced by the official position of the government. Consequently, this thesis will consider the particular media discourse on NATO at hand as embedded in the general framework of the respective official state discourse.

Nevertheless, it is important to stress here that the preceding discussion on the limitations of mass media freedom in Russia by no means implies the understanding of media discourse as limited to the state propaganda in this thesis. The ‘propaganda model’ would diminish the complex role media plays in the society: it would limit the former to some kind of a deliberate misinformation tool and the latter to that of naïve objects of manipulation.

This thesis adopts a more complex understanding of the Ria Novosti media discourse. In addition to being regarded as largely reflecting the official position of the government, it is understood as also possessing general features of a media discourse discussed above. Consequently, it seen as grounded in the broader socio-cultural context of the Russian society.

In this regard Larsen points out that while it is possible to draw distinction ‘between expressions of discourse and ‘purely rhetorical/tactical uses of language directed at short-term political goals’ [referring to propaganda in the broad sense] even in their rhetorical/tactical use of language, actors are still subjects to the constraints of discourse (Larsen 1999: 454). Thus, any deliberate ideological use of language still takes place in the wider background of a given cultural discursive system of concepts and meanings.

Consequently, DA into news discourse allows to ‘unpack the naturalness of the ideological codes implicated in their representations of reality’ (Allan 2004: 81).

*The third pillar of the present thesis is the understanding of news as a type of discourse. Thus, the main objective of DA into media texts is to reveal taken-for-granted conventions which together construct certain versions of reality.*
Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study will largely rely on the thick strand of constructivism as its theoretical background. In particular, it will be based on three theoretical pillars: foreign policy as a social construct, language as a constitutive part of social reality and media as a type of discourse.

The brief summary of the discussion of this chapter can be (with a certain degree of simplification) schematically presented as following:

Table 1: schematic presentation of the three theoretical pillars of the study

Consequently, the three pillars this study is based on should be viewed as interrelated. For instance, the view on the language (discourse) as more than a value-free vehicle of communication adopted in this study, has direct implications for the view on media as a type of discourse. Furthermore, understanding media discourse as grounded in the socio-cultural dimension provides certain theoretical grounds for approaching the Russian foreign policy discourse on NATO reflected in the media.
3. Methodology

‘Has not the practice of revolutionary discourse and scientific discourse over the past two hundred years freed you from this idea that words are wind, an external whisper, a beating of wings that one has difficulty in hearing in serious matter of history?’

(Foucault 2002: 209)

3.1. Relation between Discourse Analysis and Constructivism

DA as a research method aims at uncovering the way versions of the world, of society, events and inner psychological worlds are produced in discourse (Potter 1997: 146, cited in Bryman 2008: 500). Notably, many of the unconventional ideas brought up by this definition (such as the understanding of the social world as comprising a variety of ‘versions’, view on the reality as not ‘really’ existing but produced through language, social research as dealing with the subjective domain instead of producing scientifically objective accounts, etc.) have been touched upon in the previous chapter dealing primarily with social constructivism as a theoretical perspective. This raises the question of relation between the theory and the methodology for the present thesis.

Indeed, there are many similarities between the ‘thicker’ of social constructivism and DA (Lilja 2007: 20). Firstly, they share the critique of the idea that language mirrors the objective world, suggesting that both reality and mind are constitutes of discursive practices. Secondly, both DA and constructivism aim at studying different versions of the reality rather than one ‘objective’ version. Finally, they are both critical of such traditional research criteria as validity and reliability (this point will be discussed in greater detail in the respective section below).

Furthermore, Jennifer Milliken proposes an interesting approach to viewing the relationship between DA and constructivism. She suggests that studies dealing with discourse as the main theoretical concept in general tend to blur borders between poststructuralists, postmodernists, some feminists and social constructivists and labels these scholars as ‘discourse community’ (Milliken 1999: 225, 228). Milliken grounds her argument in the suggestion that all these schools share a common rejection of epistemic realism but instead employ interpretation ‘that acknowledges the improbability of cataloguing,
calculating and specifying ‘real causes’ concerning itself instead with considering the manifest political consequences of adopting one mode of representation over another’ (Campbell 1993: 7-8, cited in Milliken 1999: 226).

Subsequently, the common grounds shared by social constructivism and DA bear important implications for this study. Therefore, although the theoretical perspectives and the methodology are discussed in separate chapters in this work, they should be viewed together as a general theoretical-methodological framework of the present thesis.

3.2. **Qualitative research strategy**

In analysis of media texts, both quantitative and qualitative research strategies can be employed, depending on the focus of the analysis. For the reasons outlined below, the present thesis will adopt qualitative research strategy. The aim of the study is to conduct analysis of a certain discourse as a type of a social practice rather than, for example, provide ‘objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication’ (Berelson 1952: 18, cited in Bryman 2008: 274), in which case quantitative content analysis would be used. As argued before, it is not the purpose of the present study to produce the objective account of facts but instead to provide interpretation of the texts, focusing on what kinds of discourses they contain. Therefore, qualitative approach is a rather logical choice.

According to Bryman, besides tending to concern with words rather than numbers, qualitative research usually has the following features: it relies on inductive theory, adopts an epistemological position of interpretivism and an ontological position of constructivism (Bryman 2008: 366).

*Inductive relationship between theory and research* implies drawing generalizable inferences out of observations (Bryman 2008: 11). The starting point for the inductive strategy is data collection and analysis, on the basis of which researcher later makes conclusions and produces theories. In other words, contrary to the deductive approach, the inductive theory does not involve testing a certain existing theory or hypothesis, but aims at generating new ones. Such an approach is called iterative or recursive in results in production of grounded theory. The present thesis follows the inductive research approach.
since it does not intend to test a certain hypothesis. On the contrary, it intends to generate findings in the course of news analysis.

Since the other two features, namely the epistemological and ontological positions, deserve particular attention in this thesis (as will be argued for below), they will be discussed in a separate section.

### 3.3. Ontological assumptions and epistemological choices

#### Double-faceted nature of discourse analysis

As discussed in the previous chapter, DA can be seen as simultaneously being a theoretical umbrella and a methodological framework. While the former understanding has been considered in the part on theoretical perspectives employed by the thesis; the latter view will be discussed here.

Making a distinction between the two understandings, it is, however, important to emphasize that such a division line is introduced for the sake of clearer and systematic discussion only. In fact, adopting DA as a methodological tool presupposes acceptance of it as a theoretical perspective as well. It is, for instance, impossible to conduct a research into how a state identity is formed and reflected in media texts without recognizing that language is more than a mere transparent vehicle of communication. On the contrary, discourse theory regards discourse and social world as being mutually constitutive: it ‘investigates the way in which social practices articulate and contest the discourses that constitute social reality (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000: 3). It is therefore impossible to discuss DA as a methodological approach without referring to the philosophical position as well as the assumptions and understandings which it implies for a social research.

#### Ontology and epistemology

Bryman provides the following definitions for the concepts of ontology and epistemology:

- Ontological issues as ones regarding the nature of social entities. He suggests that the central ontological question is the one of whether social entities can and should be considered objective entities that have a reality external to social actors, or
whether they can and should be considered social constructions built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors;

- Epistemological issues concern the question of what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge in discipline. A central issue in this context is the question of whether the social world can and should be studied according to the same principles, procedures and ethos as the natural sciences (Bryman 2008: 12-18).

As discussed in the previous chapter, the present thesis draws on the theoretical assumptions of constructivism, the perspective which emerged as an attempt to challenge the then-dominant theoretical schools (neo-realism and neo-liberalism) on the grounds of their scientific methodology. Since ontological and epistemological issues are and together form a basis for methodological considerations, it seems important to concentrate on the existing approaches here.

The questions of ontology and epistemology are particularly significant for the present study and therefore will be discussed in a rather detailed manner. The two concepts are interrelated since they both deal with the question of how reality should be treated: while the former regards reality as either objective or socially constructed, the latter considers whether reality can be explained or only interpreted. According to the choice made in each case, both ontological and epistemological stances are divided into two binary opposed positions.

**Ontology**

The two suggested ontological positions are expressed in terms of the dichotomy between ‘objectivism’ and ‘constructivism’ (Bryman 2008).

Objectivism is an ontological position which considers social phenomena and their meanings as having an existence which is independent of social actors (Bryman 2008: 18).

Constructivism asserts that the effects of social structures cannot be reduced to independently existing agents and their interactions (Carlnaes 2002: 335). Constructivists challenge the assumption that reality is external to social actors, instead they see it as produced through social interaction and therefore being in a constant state of change.
Moreover, ideas and assumptions about the social world are also social products whose meanings are constructed through interaction.

The present study draws on the constructivist theoretical framework; therefore, it adopts constructivism as its ontological position.

**Epistemology**

In a similar manner to ontology, epistemology also offers two possible rivalry positions: ‘positivism’ and ‘interpretivism’ (Bryman 2008: 13).

Positivism is an epistemological position which advocates the application of the methods of the natural sciences to the study of social reality (Bryman 2008: 13).

On the contrary, interpretivism objects positivists’ main postulates such as assumptions that only knowledge confirmed by senses can be regarded as such and that science is of an objective nature and value free. Interpretivists find application of scientific model to the study of the social world inadequate as it is not able to capture the meanings which human beings attach to social reality. Consequently, in this view, the focus in a research should be shifted from explanation to understanding and interpretation (Bryman 2008: 15).

Since the present study intends to conduct analysis of a discourse as a social practice while at the same time regarding reality as constructed through language, it possesses a distinctive interpretative nature.

### 3.4. **Critical Discourse Analysis**

In the contemporary scholarship, there are many different approaches to and, consequently, many different ways of conducting a DA (Gee 2001: 5). Historically, it emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s incorporating developments from various disciplines such as philosophy, anthropology, ethnography, linguistics, literary studies, poetics, psychology, sociology, communication, history and political science (Pietikäinen 2001: 57). The heterogeneity of perspectives on language offered by these disciplines has laid the basis for diversity in the methodological corpus of DA. Moreover, there is no uniformity regarding the meaning and the use of the concept of discourse in the contemporary scholarship (as discussed above), which accommodates difference in
approaches toward conducting the actual analysis of a discourse. Finally, the diversity of the method could also be explained by the variety of the issues which could be addressed through DA, i.e. any language use in context. The object of analysis can be literature, speeches, interviews, political campaigns, media, etc. Even the study of media itself – the focus of the present thesis - can be approached through different kinds of analysis, e.g.: sociolinguistic, conversation, semiotic, cultural-generic analysis (Fairclough 1995: 21-31).

Among such a wide range of available approaches, this study will draw in particular on contributions offered by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA was first introduced by Norman Fairclough. He drew upon a wide selection of theories, including both linguistic (Halliday) and sociological ones (Foucault, Gramsci, Giddens) (Pietikäinen: 2000: 78).

The advantage of this method over other possible options lies in the attempt to bridge two main schools in DA: the linguistic and social approach. Thus, on the one hand, similarly to the linguistic strand, this method pays particular attention to linguistic features of a given text. On the other hand, following the social tradition of DA, this method draws on the interdependence between the social and the discursive. Consequently, it combines close scrutiny and systematicity of linguistic analysis with the theories of identity, power, knowledge and ideology (Pietikäinen 2000: 65). According to Fairclough, ‘...the development of an approach to DA which is theoretically adequate as well as practically usable requires a synthesis of linguistically-oriented DA and the insights of recent social theory on language and discourse’ (Fairclough 1992: 37).

The central element of Fairclough’s contribution is his three-dimensional conception of discourse which brings together three separate analytical traditions: understanding of discourse as interrelation of text, discursive practice and social practice (Fairclough 1992: 73). The difference between the three levels lies essentially in the level of abstraction. According to Fairclough, discursive practice takes an intermediate position between text and social practice and in this way serves as a connector and a mediator between the two. He further suggests that particular features of social practice shape discourse practice which, in its turn, determines properties of text. Similarly, certain characteristics of text influence discourse practice which in the end alters social practices (Fairclough 1995: 60).
To sum up, Fairclough’s framework facilitates both macro and micro aspects of social life, and emphasizes importance of language for the social reality. As a result, it is generally accepted as an important input into DA studies (Pietikäinen 2000: 78). However, according to Pietikäinen, Fairclough’s contribution contains relatively small amount of empirical work on the basis of his framework, and thus is ‘somewhat unsatisfactory in terms of systematization and explication’. As a result, most scholars inspired by Fairclough, have either selectively adopted some parts of his framework, or assumed its general idea while developing their own ways of dealing with DA in practice (Pietikäinen 2000: 80).

This is also the case of the present thesis. Adopting Fairclough’s three-dimensional conception of discourse bears important implication for this work as it allows to view news discourse (as both texts and a media discourse practice) as interrelated with state identity and difference construction (social practice). Yet, this thesis should not be seen as an attempt of an empirical application of Fairclough’s conception. Such a direct application would require an in-depth lexical, grammatical and syntactical account on the data, which would be hardly possible due to the large volume of the material used.

**Discourse analysis in practice**

According to Jorgensen and Phillips, the point of DA is to analyze material in order to identify unobvious, hidden and taken for granted ‘common sense understandings’ (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002: 21, cited in Lilja 2007: 30). In other words, the task of a researcher using DA as a method is to ‘deconstruct’ texts in order to see how they have been ‘constructed’ to present a certain version of the social world, meanings and identities.

There is no generally accepted way of conducting a research in DA. As Howarth and Stavrakakis put it, ‘...while discourse theorists acknowledge the central role of theoretical frameworks in delimiting their objects and methods of research, thus rejecting crude empiricist and positivist approaches, they are concerned to prevent the subsumption of each empirical case under its own abstract theoretical concepts and logics (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000: 5, original emphasis). In other words, instead of applying a pre-existing theory in every empirical case, DA scholars use the theory in a more flexible way and ‘articulate their concepts in each particular enactment of concrete research’ (Ibid).
Moreover, the emphasis on interpretative understanding of social action rather than explanation gives DA a distinctively subjective character. Since its task is not to provide a neutral account of given phenomena but to interpret them, the researcher’s own understanding becomes crucial not only for the outcome but also for the way the research is conducted. Therefore a set procedure for conducting a DA in some cases might pose limitations on the research instead of providing guidelines. Thus, as summarized by Pietikäinen, rather than being one specific way of conducting research, DA refers to a ‘general orientation to the study of constructions of social phenomena, underpinning social elements, historical embeddedness, and consequences in terms of representations, constructions, identities and knowledge’ (Pietikäinen 2000: 63).

Although the absence of an established step-by-step scheme might be seen as a weakness, it can be argued on the contrary that the interpretivist nature of DA work provides valuable advantages before other methods, e.g. qualitative content analysis. Content analysis conducted of the same data would concentrate on predetermined categories with explicit manifestations in the material. In contrast, DA as a more flexible interpretative approach will allow looking into implicit categories and assumptions which would not be accounted for by content analysis.

**Adopting Fairclough’s three-dimensional conception of discourse as the analytical scheme**

The present research will adopt Fairclough’s three-dimensional conception of discourse as the model for analysis.

As suggested before, the central element of Faircough’s contribution is his three-dimensional conception of discourse which brings together three separate analytical traditions: understanding of discourse as interrelation of text, discursive practice and social practice (Fairclough 1992: 73). Figure 1 below schematically represents this relation:
Table 2: Fairclough’s three-dimensional conception of discourse (Fairclough 1992: 73)

The central idea in Fairclough’s works is that discursive practice in this view occupies an intermediate position between text and social practice and in this way serves as a connector and a mediator between the two. Consequently, conducting a DA should include examination of a given discourse on each level: the part of the procedure which deals with the analysis of texts is called ‘description’ whereas the part which deals with the analysis of discourse practice and social practice can be called ‘interpretation’ (Fairclough 1992: 73). Moreover, such an examination should not be a summary of findings on each separate dimension but a synthesis thereof because these levels are interrelated. Such a ‘synthetic’ analysis is possible if one understands the relationship between discourse and the social structure as dialectical: language use is at the same time socially shaped and socially shaping; and it is therefore important to avoid overemphasizing either of the two processes (Fairclough 1992: 65).

Furthermore, Fairclough emphasizes the twin focus of analysis (Fairclough 1995:76): given language use should be viewed simultaneously as a particular discourse event and, at a more abstract level, broader discourse practices associated with a particular social domain. The task of the researcher is therefore to analyze both ‘sides of the coin’ at the same time. For instance, the categories can be looked at starting from the more general level and finishing with a more concrete one, or the other way round.

Adopting Fairclough’s model for the present research implies accepting the view that the three dimensions are dialectically interrelated. Thus, understanding of certain properties of texts will shed light on discourse practices and social practices, and vice versa. On the level of the text, particular attention in this study will be paid to the use of epithets, metaphors,
dichotomies, comparisons, ironic use of language, etc. These concrete linguistic devices are expected to present concrete clues for the analysis of social practice, while insights from the latter are expected to provide general directions for the linguistic analysis. As a result, the present study will be conducted as a multi-level process in the form of shifting the discussion in the ‘bottom-up-top-down’ direction. Schematically this can be represented as following:

‘Text ⇔ discursive dimension ⇔ social dimension’.

The analysis procedure as applied to the data in this particular research will be described in a greater detail in the chapter dealing with the analysis. As suggested before, due to the interpretivist nature of DA, there is no precise step-by-step scheme which could be presented in this general outline of the analysis procedure.

3.5. Validity, reliability and the Role of the Researcher

As discussed in the previous section, the emphasis on interpretative understanding of social action rather than explanation gives DA a distinctively subjective character. The shift from explanation to understanding implies that the role of the researcher also changes from an ‘objective observer of the world’ to a ‘subjective interpreter of constructed social reality’.

Such a shift gives a researcher considerable freedom both in terms of the conducting a research and the conclusions drawn from it. Thus, hypothetically different researchers using identical data may come up with different results. This may raise the question of the accuracy of the results and, consequently, the relevance of the method as such. Put differently, the interpretivist nature of the research calls for a discussion on its validity and reliability.

Validity and reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency of the researcher’s results. (Bryman 2008: 31-32). In other words, it is concerned with the question of whether the outcomes of the study will be repeated in case if, for instance, the study is replicated by another researcher.

Validity relates to the integrity of the conclusions generated from a research. For instance, it is concerned with causality between selected variables used in the research (internal validity), possibility of generalization of a given study beyond the specific research
context and thus whether the sample is representative (external validity), and the question of whether measures really represent the concepts they are supposed to (measurement validity) (Bryman 2008: 32-33).

Without concentrating in great detail on the meaning of ‘variables’, ‘measures’ and ‘samples’, It is important to point out that all these concepts are primarily concerned with the task of objective measurement (Bryman 2008:32).

Both constructivism (as the theoretical perspective) and critical discourse analytical approach (as the methodological choice) share important similarities and therefore should be seen as a general theoretical and methodological framework of the present thesis. They both reject the possibility of studying the social reality outside of meanings and ideas attached to it. Moreover, they both emphasize subjectivity and thus different interpretations can be equally credible. Using constructivist and discourse analytical perspective implies that a researcher in the process of analysis makes their own interpretations which will not be the same in case another person conducts the research using the same data. Burr argues that ‘the researchers must view the research as necessarily a co-production between themselves and the people they are researching’ and that ‘objectivity is an impossibility, since each of us, of necessity must encounter the world from one perspective or another’ (Burr 1995: 160, cited in Lilja 2007: 31).

Consequently, research criteria such as validity and reliability cannot be applied in a traditional way in this thesis. It can be argued that, in this work, they rather refer to the selection of sources (what articles are included and what are left aside; what is the choice based upon) and the argumentation of analysis (how certain conclusions are explained and motivated and how empirical material is used to exemplify them). Therefore, in order to keep the research consistent and integrated, ‘thick descriptions’ will be provided of both the selection criteria and the analysis of the material (Bryman 2008: 383). Moreover, while extensive references to the source material will made, the quotes will not be selected randomly but to exemplify general trends in representations. Finally, systemic linguistic level of analysis will be used in order to justify and exemplify the researcher’s choices and assumptions in the process of analysis.
The role of the researcher

As mentioned in the beginning of the section, the role of the researcher in DA shifts from an objective observer to subjective interpreter. This has important implications for both the process and the outcome of the research. Hence, it is appropriate to finish this chapter by a short discussion on the researcher’s background.

Since the research will entail analysis of the Russian media the questions of Russian national identity, the researcher’s own identity and country of origin (Ukraine) should be considered. On the one hand, this can be seen as an advantage, since the news articles will be analyzed through the researcher’s second mother tongue (Russian) which will allow for a better understanding of subtleties and different shades of meaning. Moreover, although fluent in the language, the researcher does not share national identity with the targeted audience. Therefore, it will hypothetically be easier to conduct the DA i.e. to identify the hidden common-sense assumptions in the discourse.

On the other hand, however, identifying common-sense understandings can be problematic as the analysts themselves are often part of the culture under study (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002:21, cited in Lilja 2007:30). The question of relations between NATO and the Russian Federation might be sensitive for a Ukrainian person, which, arguably, can manifest in reliance on their own background knowledge and assumptions in the course of the research. This leads to the possible critique of partiality. Therefore, the awareness of the possibility of the researcher’s bias adds to the advantage of the research process. I will distance myself from the material as much as possible. Moreover, my aim is not to assess the discourses as ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ but to ‘explore patterns in and across the statements and identify [...] different representations of reality’ (Ibid.).
Part II: analysis

4. Russian foreign policy discourse on NATO

4.1. Analysis procedure

First of all selected articles were gathered together in chronological order in a separate document for convenience. They were further carefully read and reread several times until the text became well familiar. During these readings the main goal was to identify and analyze different mosaic pieces forming NATO representations in Russian media discourse. Practically this involved looking for ‘coherent sets of statements or phrases which appear to talk about or represent events in similar ways, for metaphors which bring with them particular images of the events described, for words which seem loaded with meaning’ (Burr, 1995: 168, cited in Lilja 2007:63).

According to Fairclough’s three-dimensional model, the discursive dimension occupies an intermediate position and functions as a link between the text and the social practice. Therefore, specific linguistic features of the news articles as well as the particular political context of NATO-Russia relations (the Georgian conflict and worsening of NATO-Russia relations) within which the discourse took place were closely considered. In fact, the analysis procedure undertaken can be briefly described as focusing on the discursive level while shifting upwards and downwards between the textual and the social dimensions.

In the early stages of the analysis, the discussed above analytical model was applied to deal with each research question separately. For instance, in the context of the question on representation of NATO and its role in the Georgian crisis, the process of analysis can be schematically described in the following way. Firstly articles were carefully read many times until a good level of familiarity with the data was achieved. In the process of reading some key words, phrases or references to specific socio-cultural phenomena were highlighted and brief notes were taken; they were revisited at later stages of the analysis. Further, based on the personal subjective perception of the material and distantly from
the text, I made a list of features, themes and images which, in my perception, were repeatedly associated with NATO. For instance, one of such hypothetical perceptions in the articles was repeated reference to NATO’s expansionist nature. After having completed the list, I went back to the material trying to look for particular linguistic manifestations in the articles to confirm or discard the hypotheses. As a result, some themes were deleted and altered and new ones were added. For instance, the theme ‘NATO’s expansionist nature’ was further developed to include two distinct features: ‘geographical expansion’ and ‘functional expansion’. The themes were further regrouped and merged into what in this analysis is regarded as ‘discourses’, followed by linguistic evidence found in the texts. A similar procedure of reexamining correspondence between the original source and the findings was repeated several times.

A similar process of analysis was applied to the second and third research questions. The discourses identified in the course of the analysis are based on repeated patterns. Although only some instances from the text are included in the analysis, there were many more of them found drawing on similar ideas. Thus, while the analysis mechanism can be shown schematically as "text↔discursive dimension↔social dimension", the results presentation can be shown as "text⇒discursive/social dimension". This scheme is used for practical reasons, since it is not possible to document every shift between dimensions which occurred in the process of the analysis. Consequently, the fact that this scheme takes text (particular quotes) as its starting point does not mean that the analysis is only based on individual citations.

The final analysis is presented in the form of distinct discourses grouped in three sections (corresponding to the original research questions). It should be noted, however, that all discourses are to a great extent interrelated and mutually complementary. Therefore, the final division is rather conventional and is done for the sake of a consistent discussion. In the analysis, it was common that the same discourse was found in different articles, while the same word or phrase appeared under different discourses. This is different from content analysis where words or phrases may occupy only one coding category (Burr 1995: 68, cited in Lilja 2007: 63). Moreover, the nature of the present analysis is highly interpretative and the discourses identified in it do not always correspond
to content-characteristic words or phrases in the articles, as should be the case in qualitative content analysis (Elo and Kyngäs 2008: 111).

In this thesis quotations are used as illustrative examples. They have been translated from Russian as close to the original language as possible. Consequently, some expressions do not completely meet English grammar rules. This way of translation was chosen in order to preserve the original patterns as much as possible since the language plays crucial role in DA. In some instances it was necessary to add extra text in order to clarify the meaning of the sentence. This was done in brackets as following: ‘[…].’

4.2. Results

4.2.1. Constructing the enemy image

As to the discourses on NATO and its role in the Georgian crisis, the overall unfavorable representation of the organization was evident throughout all the material analyzed. In this context, different negative features were highlighted: NATO’s position was depicted as aggressive, expansionist and overall threatening for the European security stability. Moreover, there was a general consensus in the articles that particular organizations policies were not only inadequate in the context of the Georgian war but had themselves contributed to the confrontation.

4.2.1.1. Intransigent, self-interest driven alliance

One of the most common features of the Russian discourse on NATO in the Ria Novosti articles analyzed in this work, was a general negative representation of NATO as an aggressive, self-interest driven alliance whose main objective in the Georgian crisis was to pursue its own strategic interests rather than to promote peace and security in the region:

Североатлантическому альянсу надо преодолеть в себе излишнее самомнение, убежденность в своей исключительности и правоте, учитывать не только собственные корпоративные
North Atlantic Alliance must overcome its excessive self-conceit, the belief in its exclusivity and righteousness, it should take into account not only its own corporate interests, but also the national interests of other states. (01.12.2008)

Besides the explicit condemnation of the position taken by NATO, the criticism here extends to the very nature of the organization including ‘the belief in its exclusivity and righteousness’ and the tendency to follow its own interests at the expense of other states’ interests. The linguistic choice of the expression ‘other states’ instead of ‘the Russian Federation’ (which, supposedly, is the primarily referent of the quoted phrase) introduces a shift from a particular situation (the Georgian conflict) to the general trend, thus producing the image of an intransigent, self-interest driven alliance which does ‘not exist for the creation of informational and political objectivity, but for the protection of the interests of the bloc and its members’ (19.08.2008). Moreover, the auxiliary verb ‘must’ (‘overcome excessive its self-conceit’) is generally used to imply strong moral obligation and thus indicates that the change is necessary.

A similar way of construction of a perpetual negative representation of NATO can be traced in the following passage:

Это наступательный союз, уже попробовавший свои силы на Югославии в 1999 году, затем занявшийся доступом к энергетическим ресурсам (Ирак), а сейчас активно пытающийся помешать усилию новых держав – Китая, Индии, Бразилии, Ирана, России и так далее. (07.05.2009)

This is an aggressive alliance, which has already tried itself in Yugoslavia in 1999; then it switched to gaining access to energy resources (Iraq); and
is now actively trying to prevent the growth of new powers [such as] China, India, Brazil, Iran, Russia and so on. (07.05.2009)

Similarly to the case in the previous example, the parallel between allegedly negative actions taken by NATO at different times suggests that aggression and partiality are its general features, not limited to a specific time or situation.

4.2.1.2. NATO as the aggressor pursuing both functional and geographical expansion

Another negative characteristic largely referred to throughout the Ria Novosti articles, was the expansionist nature of the alliance. Different discourses drew on expansion in terms of new territories and/or functions. In either case, it was depicted in overwhelmingly negative shades. The expansion was consensually equated with aggressiveness and was in sharp contrast with the official NATO position stating that the main objective of the organization’s enlargement is ‘to promote stability and cooperation’ and that ‘enlargement process poses no threat to any country’ (NATO⁵). The following quotes are some examples of the ‘expansionism’ discourse:

Задержка с подбором кандидатуры нового натовского политического шефа очень похожа на синдром. В ней отражается главная болезнь блока: он пытается вырасти из военного союза в глобальный военно-политический, но никак не может изобрести под это новую идеологию. (02.04.2009)

The delay with the appointment of the new NATO political boss [the Secretary General] to a great extent resembles a syndrome. It reflects the main disease of the bloc: it is trying to grow from a military alliance into a global military-political one, but yet is struggling to invent a new ideology. (02.04.2009)

The terms ‘syndrome’ and ‘disease’ are generally used in reference to something abnormal, which needs to be changed or ‘cured’. The metaphorical use of these linguistic units indicates the negative attitude towards the expansionist tendency of NATO and the undesirability of its enlargement in terms of new functions. Consequently, the functional expansionism of the military alliance is portrayed as inadequate: NATO is trying to increase areas of its influence, yet it is unable to ‘invent a new ideology’ in order to justify its aspirations before other actors.

However, the critique of the NATO expansionism mostly referred to the areas of direct interest for the Russian Federation. Thus, although geographic enlargement was condemned in general, particular criticism was aimed at the Eastern enlargement through the countries bordering Russia:

Североатлантический пакт пока еще не замкнул полностью кольцо вокруг России, но подошел к этому очень близко.(19.08.2008)

North Atlantic Alliance has not yet fully locked its ring around Russia, but has come to this very close (19.08.2008)

The metaphor of the ‘NATO ring locked around Russia’ has been used repeatedly throughout the analyzed material. NATO was not merely presented as an abstract evil body. In contrast, its perception was constructed as that of a defined threat: because of its expansionist nature, NATO was ‘growing’ (02.04.2009) ‘approaching’ Russian borders’ (22.04.2009) and intending to ‘close its ring around Russia’ (19.08.2008). All these concepts are expressed through dynamic verbs which together construct the idea of a concrete, acting danger. These linguistic devices allow for a parallel with a military occupation, with the frontier being moved to the East, towards the Russian borders. Such a representation is likely to produce a perception of threat associated with the NATO expansion. A similar representation of events can be found in the following quote:

Очевидно, что Россия не может игнорировать приближение военной инфраструктуры стран НАТО к своим границам:
It is obvious that Russia cannot ignore the military infrastructure of NATO approaching its borders: the expansion of the bloc is accompanied by introduction of air patrol, modernization of airports, and establishment of military bases on the territory of the new member states. (22.04.2009)

This instance provides a list of military modernizations accompanying NATO membership for its newcomers. Yet, there is no explicit explanation of why, for instance, the introduction of an air patrol in the neighboring states is dangerous or undesirable. Consequently, the threat image is implicit in the passage; and the readers are expected to make this link themselves. The key word here is ‘obvious’ (in the beginning of the quote): without providing concrete justification, it refers to the shared background knowledge about NATO as a possible threat.

4.2.1.3. NATO’s responsibility for the Georgian conflict

Another feature of the representation of NATO in the Russian state agency news during and after the Georgian war was the alleged accountability of the alliance for the conflict. The NATO responsibility discourse was well articulated and one of the most commonly found in the articles. In this line of argument, not only was the NATO position mistaken after the outbreak of the military clash, but the very crisis had been to a great extent provoked by the NATO actions:

И НАТО выступало на саммитах Совета, как двадцать шесть против одного. В таких условиях добиться взаимопонимания, учета интересов всех сторон было невозможно. Апогей этому взаимопониманию как раз и пришёлся на 8 августа, начало агрессии Грузии против Южной Осетии (01.12.2008)
At the summits of the Council, the NATO acted as the twenty-six against one. In such circumstances, it was impossible to achieve mutual understanding, to take into account the interests of all parties. The peak of this misunderstandings happened on August 8, with the beginning of the Georgian aggression against South Ossetia. (01.12.2008)

Thus, in this discourse, the cause and responsibility for the events in August 2008 is attributed to NATO rather than to the parties immediately involved in the military actions such as Russian or Georgian governments. It was the NATO policy of the enlargement which supposedly destabilized the security on the European continent and made the Georgian military aggression possible:

Действительно, грузинская агрессия против российских миротворцев (и уничтожение грузинами мирных жителей Цхинвали) показала, куда ведет нагнетание враждебности, политика окружения России всеми новыми членами альянса. (07.05.2009)

Indeed, the Georgian aggression against Russian peacekeepers (and the extermination of Georgian civilians in Tskhinvali) showed where the bloc’s policy – that of hostility escalation and surrounding Russia with new members – really leads. (07.05.2009)

Noticeably, lexical choices used to represent different parties are also suggestive: ‘Russian peacekeepers’, ‘innocent Tskhinvali civilians’ (21.04.2009) and ‘Georgian aggressors’, ‘great swinish trick on the part of the bloc’ (29.04.2009). These signifiers were repeatedly used in the articles and helped to construct an unambiguous representation of the vents, with clear division into the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’ actors.
4.2.1.4. **NATO as a ‘paper soldier’**

Seemingly in contrast with the image of NATO as an expansive aggressor, was the discourse on NATO as a *weakening and gradually declining alliance*. However, a more careful reading suggests that the weakness of NATO is directly linked to its expansion and is caused by it. *Firstly, the geographic enlargement* through new members *weakens the military potential* of NATO:

*НАТО уменьшающимися силами должно защищать увеличивающуюся территорию. В блок принимаются все менее дееспособные в военном отношении страны, а "старые" члены альянса с каждым годом утрачивают желание и/или возможность воевать. (12.09.2008)*

*Today's NATO has to be able to defend an increasing territory with diminishing forces. The bloc continues to accept less and less militarily capable states, while the "old" members are losing the ability and/or the desire to carry a war. (12.09.2008)*

*Secondly*, the *eagerness for functional expansion* combined with the limited ability to readjust to the new post-cold war circumstances makes NATO largely *inadequate and useless in the contemporary world*:

*НАТО сегодня похожа на знаменитого солдата Булата Окуджавы:*

*Он переделать мир хотел,*

*Чтоб был счастливым каждый,*

*А сам на ниточке висел,*

*Ведь был солдат бумажный.*

*(25.08.2008)*
Today’s NATO is similar to the famous soldier from Bulat Okudzhava’s song:

*He wanted to change the world,*

*So that everyone was happy,*

*But he was hanging by a thread,*

*Because he was a soldier made of paper.*

*(25.08.2008)*

The metaphor of a ‘soldier’ in relation to NATO is used to draw parallel between the military person and the military alliance. However, the analogy acquires a new meaning with the epithet ‘paper’ introduced in the very last line of the strophe. A ‘paper soldier’ cannot be taken as a serious danger. This linguistic device implies weakness and absurdness: the soldier is *willing to but unable to change the world.* The above passage is taken from ‘Paper Soldier’ (1959), a famous and widely-known song from the Soviet times. The use of a light-hearted ballade might seem slightly bizarre in a serious news article; however, it has a particular function in the text. The reference to the symbolic character familiar to the majority of Russian speakers is interesting because it is culturally specific and thus is not likely to make sense to an ‘outsider’. It presupposes a certain background cultural knowledge from the reader in order to ‘decode’ the message. *The use of socio-culturally specific concepts intensifies the ‘establishing of political frontiers between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’”* (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000).

### 4.2.1.5. American domination factor in the European security

Although in the previous discussion NATO has been regarded as a single unity, it is worth bringing up another critical discourse found in the Russian media, namely, the discourse on what interests are actually represented by NATO. In this regard, two somehow conflicting and at the same time overlapping discourses can be found.
The first discourse suggests that NATO is a mostly American dominated organization, thus any actions it undertakes are meant to serve the foreign policy interests of Washington:

Североатлантическому альянсу надо [...] научиться действовать не только по указанию Вашингтона, но и под эгидой Совета безопасности ООН. (01.12.2008)

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization should [...] learn to act not only at the direction of Washington, but also under the auspices of the UN Security Council. (01.12.2008)

…в апреле блок впервые будет приветствовать своего де-факто хозяина, президента США Барака Обаму. (26.01.2009)

...in April, the bloc will welcome for the first time its de facto owner, President Barack Obama. (26.01.2009)

The phrase ‘de facto owner’ used in the last sentence presupposes an implicit opposition: it implies that, ‘de juro’, or ‘by law’, the NATO policies should not be determined by the United States. By extension, this argument suggests that the domination of the American factor in the European Security is illegitimate. Consequently, NATO policies are portrayed as inadequate to meet the security needs on the European continent. This discourse is to a great extent interconnected with the need for alternative security mechanism discourse discussed in greater detail below.

The second discourse is more complex and produces the perception of NATO as divided into two camps: the ‘Old Europe’ as opposed by the United States and the ‘New Europe’ (the Eastern European countries which joined NATO recently). Similarly to the previous discourse, the United States is generally presented as an ‘evil empire’ tailoring NATO policies according to its own strategic benefits and ignoring interests of other actors, such as Russia. On the
contrary, the Western European states, (the ‘Old Europe’ or the ‘Great Europe’) which pursues more reasonable policies and is open to a dialogue with Russia:

...не всегда взвешенной и мало нравящейся Большой Европе позиции Белого дома в отношении Кремля. (18.08.2008)

...not always balanced and not much supported by the Great Europe, policy of the White House towards the Kremlin. (18.08.2008)

При этом НАТО еще до встречи разделилась по "группам интересов", [...] Например, "старой Европе", Германии, Франции и Италии, вовсе не хотелось и дальше расшатывались "трансатлантические основы". Но от нее явно требовали слишком много. (19.08.2008)

NATO was divided into "interest groups" even before the meeting [...]. For example, the "Old Europe", e.g. Germany, France and Italy, did not want to further shatter the "transatlantic cooperation." But what was demanded from them [by the US] was apparently too much. (19.08.2008)

Moreover, the US is said to be largely supported by the Eastern European states (the ‘New Europe’) allegedly because of their somehow unreasonable fear of Russia:

...правые в США и отчаянно правые новички из «восточного блока» внутри НАТО и Евросоюза [...] начали обвинять Саркози в том, что он утрачивает правильную ориентацию... (18.08.2008)
...the right wing in the U.S. and the desperately right-wing newcomers from the "Eastern bloc" within NATO and the EU [...] began to accuse Sarkozy that he lost the correct orientation... (18.08.2008)

The above stated quote refers to the moment when the French president Nicolas Sarkozy acted as a mediator in the cease-fire negotiations between Russia and Georgia on August 12, 2008. It is suggested that the Eastern European states did not support negotiations and eventual agreement with Russia. The epithet ‘desperately right-wing’ produces a rather negative connotation of the former Eastern bloc members which unconditionally support the US position and prefer confrontation with Russia to the option of reaching a consensus.

Such a dichotomy between the ‘American foe’ (supported by the organization’s recent newcomers) and the ‘Old European partner’ is interesting because it constructs the perception of NATO as a divided organization and thus ‘breaks’ the unity of the alliance. This introduces a new frame of perception of NATO not as a ‘sum’ of its members but as a group of different actors who need to be dealt with separately. The emphasis on the inability of the NATO allies to reach a consensus among themselves echoes to a certain extent the discourse on NATO as a weak organization discussed above.

4.2.1.6. Russian position as superior

As suggested in the theoretical chapters of this work, there is an interrelation between processes of construction of identity and difference: ‘securing something requires its differentiation, classification and definition. It has, in short, to be identified’ (Campbell 2005:199). Indeed, in the Russian security discourse on NATO examined here, the representations of identity and difference were closely linked. The construction of the ‘aggressive’, ‘weak’ or ‘irrational’ perception of NATO always took place on the background of the ‘reasonable’, ‘righteous’ and ‘rational’ self-presentation. Therefore, a brief discussion on this aspect is introduced here.
In contrast to the predominantly negative ‘pieces of mosaic’ forming the NATO image, the Russian position tended to be portrayed as ‘right’ without being questioned. Moreover, the media tended to associate with the official government’s stand, referring to it as ‘our’:

No наши позиции с большинством стран НАТО по-прежнему расходятся. (19.05.2009)

But our position continues to differ from those of the majority of the NATO countries. (19.05.2009)

Moreover, the general trend observed throughout the data, was frequent references to the official sources such as the government officials. In the present work direct quotations were deliberately excluded from the analysis in order to concentrate exclusively on the media discourse. Yet, since the officials’ statements were cited as ‘reliable’ information and never criticized, eventually they turned out to be largely incorporated in the Ria Novosti discourses.

Furthermore, since the Russian position was generally depicted as the most reasonable and rational, there is no need for them to be changed. Instead, the NATO officials are expected to ‘realize their mistakes’ and readjust their actions accordingly:

Россия ждет от НАТО признания очевидного факта: кто был тогда реальным агрессором? (05.03.2008)

Russia expects NATO to recognize the obvious answer to the question: who was the real aggressor then? [in the Georgian conflict] (05.03.2008)

Так вот, возникает вопрос: где же сделанные в НАТО выводы? Что, там кто-то думает, что можно, досадливо покрутив от
The question arises: where are the conclusions made by NATO? Do they really think there that they can simply shake their head with annoyance at what has happened and then go back to past relationships with Russia? (21.04.2009)

Thus, in the Russian superiority discourse, the fact that no ambiguity is possible in understanding the real causes and aggressors of the Georgian war is depicted as ‘obvious’. Such a dichotomy serves for a ‘negative other-representation’ (Lilja 2007: 72) and, in its turn, adds to the construction of division into ‘us’ and ‘them’.

**4.2.2. Relations between NATO and Russia: re-examining the balance of power**

Besides the primary question of whether Abkhazia and South Ossetia should or should not become independent states, the Georgian conflict had another important implication for the European continent. Since the established security cooperation mechanisms were shaken by the confrontation between the two key actors – Russia and NATO – the future political balance of power became an important question. As a result, the problematique of further cooperation with NATO was a salient issue reflected in the media. The discussion had a distinctively geo-political character and covered the nature of the present cooperation and respective roles of Russia and NATO in it, the prospects and (un)desirability of future cooperation as well as a general agreement that the existent security model is outdated and need to be reviewed.

**4.2.2.1. Ukraine and Georgia as the key elements in relations between NATO and Russia**
One of the questions which acquired a new spur in the context of the Georgian crisis was the issue of Georgian (and associated with it Ukrainian) membership in the Alliance. The possibility of the bloc’s eastern expansion was, as discussed before, portrayed as the key potential NATO threat to Russia. Consequently, the discourses on the subject were well articulated in the articles examined. Notably, discourses of future NATO-Russia relations were largely linked to the prospect of Georgian and Ukrainian accession. The NATO support for Georgia and cooperation with Russia in Afghanistan were portrayed as two available but mutually excluding options for NATO to choose from.

[Сотрудничество России и США в Афганистане] имеют, тем не менее, чрезвычайную важность и для того чтобы рисковать их срывом – повод в виде признания Россией Абхазии и Южной Осетии может оказаться недостаточным. (29.08.2008)

[The program of Russia-NATO cooperation in Afghanistan] is of a great importance for NATO and [as a result] Russia’s recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia may turn out to be an insufficient reason [for NATO] to risk losing this cooperation. (29.08.2008)

Или вы готовитесь – по сути – к конфронтации с Россией, и принимаете в НАТО два режима, вскормленных уходящей администрацией США специально для того, чтобы эту конфронтацию усугубить [...] или начинаете серьезный разговор на эти темы, и тогда зачем же обострять ситуацию. (13.11.2008)

Either you are prepared to confrontation with Russia, in which case you accept two new states into NATO, ‘brought up’ by the leaving U.S. administration deliberately in order to exacerbate this very confrontation [...] or you are ready to have a serious discussion on this subject [of cooperation], and in that case there is no need to exacerbate the situation. (13.11.2008)
Notably, in contrast to the allusions to identity discussed in the previous section, discourses drawing on the future potentials of Georgia and Ukraine mostly referred to rationalist geopolitical factors such as spheres of influence, strong and weak powers, relative gains and losses, etc. It was generally implied that the need for cooperation with Russia would make NATO change its position regarding the situation in Georgia.

Georgia’s and Ukraine’s aspirations for a membership in the alliance were commonly reflected as lobbied and managed by the Bush administration:

На беду Большой Европы, оказалось, что просто проститься с "другом Джорджем" не получается. Надо было ввести Грузию Саакашвили в НАТО через массовое убийство мирных жителей Цхинвали. Теперь, когда это обернулось явной катастрофой для Саакашвили, американцы пытаются в самом прямом смысле слова замазать союзников по НАТО своими неудачами и заставить "дожать" Кремль, который не захотел иметь у себя под боком еще одно марионеточное натовское (вашингтонское) правительство. (19.08.2008)

Unfortunately for the ‘Great Europe’, it turned out that saying goodbye to "the friend named George" was not going to be simple. [Before leaving] He had to try bringing Saakashvili’s Georgia into NATO through the mass murder of civilians in Tskhinvali. Now, when all this turned into a clear disaster for Saakashvili, the Americans are trying to get their NATO allies to help them cover up their failures and finish ‘pressing out’ the Kremlin - which just did not want to have another puppet government of NATO/Washington in proximity to Russia. (19.08.2008)
This theme is to a great extent interrelated with the discourse on NATO as an American dominated organization. Moreover, with respect to the United States promoting accession of the two Eastern European states, the expressions such as ‘drag’, ‘pull’, ‘push’ (18.08.2008, 19.08.2008, 13.11.2008, 08.12.2008, 02.04.2009) were commonly used. Besides having a clearly negative connotation, such linguistic choices represent Georgia and Ukraine weak, passive ‘Washington marionette’ (19.08.2008) regimes ‘raised’ (13.11.2008) by the powerful United States. The construction of the two states as deprived of agency is achieved both lexically and syntactically – through the predominant use of passive voice constructions. The passive representation of Georgia and Ukraine as ‘inferior’ contributes to the construction of a certain power game between the strong rivals, Russian and NATO.

4.2.2.2. Russia as a legitimate major regional power in Eastern Europe

Although this discourse was mostly not explicit, it was rather well articulated. It constructed European security power balance as two-dimensional, including NATO (or ‘the West’ in its broad sense) on the one hand and Russia at the lead of other post-Soviet states, on the other. Such a representation of a bipolar world with the imaginary frontier between ‘us’ and ‘them’ can be seen as reminiscent of the Cold War discourse (the Cold War seem will be covered in more details in the respective section). The Russian Federation was portrayed as a powerful and legitimate leader in the Eastern Europe whose moral obligation is to protect the region from foreign influences. This discourse was grounded and in both geopolitical and cultural dimensions.

Показательное игнорирование позиции России Западом в этих областях не могло не вызвать ответной реакции. Первое – в области возрождения военного противостояния, второе – в области такого же решения споров внутри СНГ в свою пользу, без оглядки на мнение Запада. (29.08.2008)
Exponential ignoring Russia's position regarding these issues by the West could not but provoke Russian reaction. As a result Russia will adopt similar approach to dispute resolution: disputes within the Commonwealth of Independent States will be solved according to its own [Russian] interests, without taking into consideration the opinion of the West. (29.08.2008)

The message delivered by the above passage is two-folded: firstly, the ‘Western’ way of resolving military conflicts (with implicit reference to Kosovo) is driven solely by self-interest and unjustified. Secondly, and as a result of it, Russia acquires a moral right to take a similar ‘egoistic’ approach in dealing with conflicts in its own zone of control – in the CIS countries. Consequently, the parallel between the situation in South Ossetia and Abkhazia with the one in Kosovo is used here as a justification of the Russian position.

[в]акуумы, возникшие после распада Союза, могут заполнить внерегиональные силы [...] Нужно лучше понимать ситуацию и увереннее действовать в собственном регионе (02.07.2008)

[т]he vacuum created after the dissolution of the Union, may turn out to be filled by forces originating from outside of the region. [...] It is necessary to better understand the situation and act more confidently in our own region. (02.07.2008)

This passage refers to the situation in the former Soviet republics which became independent states after the collapse of the USSR. Although de jure Russia does not have control over these states, they are referred to as ‘our own region’. The use of the possessive pronoun ‘our’ clearly indicates the perceived continued links between them and Russia. Moreover, the metaphor of ‘vacuum’ implies absence of a central authority in the region to replace the function of Moscow during the Soviet times. Therefore, it is up to the Kremlin to
‘act more confidently’ in order to preserve the past level of its influence. Moreover, it is not only the right but also the duty of Moscow to do so in order to prevent the ‘outside forces’ from intervening. This language choice serves to represent Russia as a legitimate leader in the region; whereas the idea of ‘outsiders’ taking over control constructs the perception of threat.

In addition to the geopolitical factors, references to the close cultural links in the CIS were also suggested as a justification of Russian exclusive legitimacy and leadership in the region. The arguments here were based on common history, language and identity in the post-Soviet states and suggested historical brotherhood between states which should not be allowed to be broken by foreign powers:

На нет сомнений в следующем: она, как и многие украинцы, пришла к выводу, что ее большая и в основном русскоязычная страна, на самом деле, никогда не сможет стать членом военного альянса, чьи ядерные ракеты направлены на россиян, живущих в самой Российской Федерации. (25.08.2008)

But there is no doubt that she [the Ukrainian Prime Minister], like many other Ukrainians, had concluded that her large and mostly Russian-speaking country, in fact, could never become a member of a military alliance whose nuclear missiles were aimed at Russians living in Russia itself. (25.08.2008)

4.2.2.3. Cooperation is impossible or unnecessary

Before developing this argument, it should be noted that this section is not meant to suggest that the very possibility of collaboration was exclusively denied in the data analyzed. In fact, some of the articles explicitly examined currently existing areas of cooperation between Russia and the alliance. These included a vast majority of issues including the fight against terrorism, anti-drug effort, crisis regulation, disaster management, combating the
proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, missile technology, illegal migration, humanitarian and peacekeeping missions, prevention of military ships and aircraft accidents and collisions and, importantly, cooperation in Afghanistan (e.g. 22.08.2008, 01.12.2008, 05.03.2009).

However, a deeper reading of the articles allows for identifying a contradicting trend, which suggested that in reality NATO-Russia cooperation was either very limited or symbolic, while the parties generally fail to reach an agreement on substantial issues:

Основополагающий акт Россия-НАТО от 1997 года – бесполезный документ, его надо менять вместе со всеми порожденными им бессмысленными заседаниями. (07.05.2009)

The founding Act on NATO-Russia [mutual relations] from 1997 is a useless document; it must be changed along with all the nonsense conferences and meetings it has generated. (07.05.2009)

…военный транзит в Афганистан через территорию России - практически единственная реальная сфера, где мы работаем вместе. (02.09.2008)

...military transit to Afghanistan through Russian territory is virtually the only area where we are really cooperating. (02.09.2008)

Moreover, the need for such cooperation was portrayed as disproportional because of NATO being more in need of the Russian assistance than the other way round. As a result, the importance of such cooperation for Russia was questioned:

Теперь же НАТО, как говорят, Россия нужна больше, чем России НАТО. А что, России эта организация - НАТО - действительно когда-нибудь была нужна? (29.04.2009)
As they say, now NATO needs Russia more than Russia needs NATO. So what, Russia has really ever needed this organization, NATO? (29.04.2009)

Но это если только не поскорее хорошенько это общее дело поверхности. А тогда выходит, что мы и террористов видим разных и в разном, хотя выражаемся одинаково: «исламский радикализм», «религиозный экстремизм». Но НАТО чеченских боевиков никогда не считало и не считает террористами. А мы не замечены в квалификации как «террористов», скажем, палестинского ХАМАС. (06.03.2009)

But the common cause is only on the surface. And if one examines the matter closer it turns out that we [Russia and NATO] see terrorists differently, although we ‘label’ them in the same way: "Islamic radicalism", "religious extremism". But NATO does not consider and has never considered Chechen fighters as terrorists. And we do not officially consider as "terrorists", say Palestinian HAMAS. (06.03.2009)

Similarly to the former instance, the latter quote suggests impossibility of cooperation between Russia and NATO. Interestingly, instead of simply pointing out the divergent strategic interests (which was the case in most examples), it suggests irreconcilable differences in the meanings ascribed to the same social facts: ‘[Russia and NATO] see terrorists differently’ (emphasis added). Thus, an allusion is made to certain common understandings and assumptions which vary among ‘us’ and ‘them’. This reference to the socio-cultural dimension accommodates establishing of political frontiers between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’.

4.2.2.4. Alternative security discourse
Another key discourse found in the Ria Novosti articles, was the one related to the security mechanisms on the European continent. It will be discussed as consisting of two parts. First, it included sharp critique of the contemporary European security system: due to the NATO dominance, it is portrayed as unjust, disproportional and, as a result, inefficient:

President reminded, that previously there were a set of institutions providing security in Europe. They were created in the 70-ies and, in his opinion, have fulfilled their function by today. (15.05.2009)

The President recalled that earlier there was a set of institutions providing security in Europe. They were created in the 70-ies and, in his opinion, have fulfilled their function by today. (15.05.2009)

NATO, possibly, under the influence of Washington, refused to heed Russia’s concerns about the unfair distribution of heavy weapons quotas according to the CFE Treaty, which occurred after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the accession of former socialist countries and republics of the USSR in the North Atlantic Alliance. (22.08.2008)

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Thus, the situation which occurred after the Warsaw Pact was dissolved is described as ‘unfair’. NATO, as the military bloc which did stay in business until now, is interested in
maintaining the unjust power balance and its own dominance. This discourse is much interrelated with the discourses on NATO as intransigent, self-interest driven organization.

The second level of the inefficient security discourse comprises suggestions in favor of a new mechanism which would be just, proportionate and insuring interests of all parties concerned. In this context, most frequently reference was made to the so-called ‘Medvedev Plan’, a project for a new European Security Treaty proposed by the Russian president.

Europe must rid itself of the NATO-centrism. We should consider a new security system on the continent - the one suggested by the President Medvedev - where NATO, as well as other elements, will be one of the many components of security. 21(29.06.2009)

The key phrase in this quote is ‘NATO-centrism’. Firstly, it is suggested to be a common knowledge that NATO-centrism is negative (since no explanation on it is provided). Secondly, the situation need to be changed drastically: this is implied by the use of the modal verb ‘must’ in the beginning of the sentence, generally used in the English language to express strong moral obligation.

4.2.3. Cold War traces

The deterioration in the relationship between NATO and Russia during the Georgian war, as well as the alleged possibility of a military clash feared by a few at the time, brought back
high degree of antagonism between the two parties. On the one hand, the situation changed significantly compared to that before 1991. On the other hand, the continuous representation of NATO as an enemy and aggressor makes it interesting to see whether any features of the Cold War discourse were to be found in the Russian media.

4.2.3.1. Antagonism between Russia and NATO

As discussed before, one of the most apparent Cold War themes present in the Ria Novosti news articles, was the representation of NATO as an ‘evil’ enemy: ‘aggressive’, ‘unjust’, ‘self-conceited’, ‘claiming the role of a world policeman’ (01.12.2008) were all different epithets used to describe it. The Russian official position, on the contrary, was discussed as legitimate, just and superior. Such a clear dichotomy between ‘the evil other’ and ‘the good self’ is similar to that existing during the Cold War. Moreover, the theme of the United States as an ‘evil empire’ was well articulated. In a similar manner, issues during the Cold War tended to be framed in terms of a ‘dichotomized world of Communist and anti-Communist powers, with gains and losses allocated to contesting ideas, and rooting for ‘our side’ was considered entirely legitimate news practice’ (Herman and Chomsky 1988: 30-31, Allan 2004: 45). Besides the bipolarity in the security discourse construction, another similar trend could be observed in the Russian state-run news agency’s articles: the official position of the government was never questioned or criticized while the officials were usually quoted as a reliable source of information.

4.2.3.2. Explicit and implicit references to the Cold War

Besides the general dichotomized representation of NATO and Russia in the news, some more direct references to the Cold War could also be found in the articles:

...экономическая, политическая, информационная войны, хотя не объявляются, но идут и не имеют перемирий. (02.07.2008)
...economic, political and information wars, although not declared, continue and have no truce. (02.07.2008)

Скорее всего, корабли альянса на Черном море – это очередные «боевые единицы» информационной войны... (29.08.2008)

Most likely, the Alliance ships in the Black Sea are just another "combat unit" of information war... (29.08.2008)

Although the phrase ‘Cold War’ is not explicitly used, these quotes make an allusion to it. In the second quote, this is done by adding the attribute ‘information’ before the object ‘war’: in fact, the information (and ideological) war between the Eastern and the Western blocs was one of the most distinctive features of the Cold War. In the first quote above a similar effect is reached by the implied continuity of the Cold War: ‘although not declared, continue and have no truce’.

4.2.3.3. Neo-Cold War discourse

Another kind of allusion to the Cold War was made through what is labeled here as a ‘Neo-Cold War discourse’. Instead of emphasizing the continuation of the Cold War, this discourse focused on the possibility of it reemerging. This discourse was generally found in the texts dealing with the current confrontation between Russia and NATO regarding the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

НАТО в Грузии могут вернуть "холодную" войну... (07.05.2009)

NATO exercises in Georgia may bring back the Cold War... (07.05.2009)

Notably, the possibility of relations with NATO degrading to the state of the Cold War was portrayed as undesirable. Such a possibility was generally presented as a result of aggressive
actions by NATO. Russia was not perceived as adding to this confrontation: its actions were presented as a reaction to those of NATO. The following quotes provide some examples of constructing Russia as reacting to aggression rather than being an aggressor itself:

Очевидно, что Россия не может игнорировать приближение военной инфраструктуры стран НАТО к своим границам... (22.04.2009)

It is obvious that Russia cannot ignore the military infrastructure of NATO approaching its borders... (22.04.2009)

Показательное игнорирование позиции России Западом в этих областях не могло не вызвать ответной реакции. (29.08.2008)

Exponential ignoring of Russia's position regarding these issues by the West could not but provoke a reaction. (29.08.2008)

4.2.3.4. The concept of the West

Finally, another implicit feature of the Cold War was to be found in the news articles analyzed. This concerns the use of the concept of ‘the West’ interchangeably with ‘NATO’, ‘the European Union’, etc.

Два вопроса, похоже, определились почти окончательно: с Россией EC должен наращивать тесные связи, а Тбилиси и Киев надо поостеречься принимать в НАТО. (26.11.2008)

Two questions, it seems, have finally become clear: the EU should strive to improve closer ties with Russia, while Tbilisi and Kiev should be denied NATO membership. (26.11.2008)
The fact that the concepts were sometimes used as *contextual synonyms* does not of course mean that they are perceived as identical in Russia. Yet, it implies that such concepts as ‘the United States’, ‘the European Union’, ‘NATO’, ‘Europe’ are all constitutive parts of a bigger *socio-cultural concept of ‘West’ in the broad sense of the word*. In this sense, it is used *in opposition with ‘Russia’*. Arguably, such can be seen as a *reminiscence of the Cold War discourse* which was build around the bipolar world consisting of ‘the Eastern’ and ‘the Western’ camps.
5. Discussion

5.1. Discussion on the empirical findings

The analysis of the Russian foreign policy discourse during and after the Georgian war has revealed certain general trends in the construction of NATO and its relations with Russia in the ‘Ria Novosti’ news agency articles. Prevailing discourses identified in the course of the analysis were discussed in detail in the previous section. This section is meant to provide a brief summary of the findings and explicitly link them to the research question. The research question asked in this thesis was:

How was a certain representation of NATO and its relations with Russia discursively constructed in the news articles of the Russian state news agency RIA Novosti?

The general research question consisted of three sub-questions. Each of them will be briefly answered separately below.

➢ What kind of representations of NATO and its role in the Georgian crisis were constructed in the Russian news?

The overall unfavorable representation of the organization was evident throughout the analyzed material. NATO was portrayed as aggressive, self-interest driven, expansionist, ideologically outdated and overall potentially threatening for the stability of the regional security. All these features together served as multiple pieces of mosaic constructing an enemy image of the organization. There was a general consensus in the articles that particular organization’s policies were not only inadequate in the context of the Georgian war but had themselves contributed to the confrontation.

This negative representation and the alleged responsibility for the conflict were constructed in contrast to positioning the Russian stance as just and therefore legitimate: it tended to be portrayed as ‘right’ without being questioned or criticized. (Consequently, the Ria Novosti discourse on NATO can be regarded as generally reflecting the official narrative of the government). There was a high degree of consensus in the articles that the
solution to the problem of confrontation was a change on the part of NATO policies (and not Russia’s). Consequently, the Russian position was constructed as superior to that of the organization. Such a ‘negative other-representation’ (Lilja 2007: 72) facilitates establishing dichotomy and drawing political frontiers between ‘us’ and ‘them’.

- How were the relations between Russia and NATO represented in the Russian foreign policy discourse?

The hypothesis suggested in the thesis with regards to the second sub-question was that the representations of NATO would be affected by a particular historical and political context, namely, the organization’s confrontation with Russia during and after the Georgian conflict.

The discourses discussed in the framework of this sub-question included Ukrainian and Georgian membership in NATO as the key cornerstone in the organization’s relations with Russia, the alleged lack of desirability and feasibility of future NATO-Russia cooperation and the discourse on contemporary NATO-centrism as an inadequate security model. These discourses shared distinctively geopolitical character and the focus on balance of power in the European security mechanism (which had been affected by the confrontation between the two key actors – Russia and NATO). The latter was constructed as two-dimensional, including NATO (or ‘the West’ in its broad sense) on the one hand and Russia at the lead of the majority of other post-Soviet states, on the other. As discussed before, ‘negative other-representation’ was a common feature of the discourses at hand and served to establish political frontiers between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Consequently, such dichotomy can be seen as part of identity construction process. Thus, the empirical analysis of Russian foreign policy discourse has revealed close interrelation between processes of construction of identity and difference discussed in the theoretical part of the thesis.

- Did the Russian discourse on NATO draw on the Cold War ideas and stereotypes?

The deterioration in the relationship between NATO and Russia during the Georgian war, as well as the alleged possibility of a military clash feared by a few at the time, brought back
high degree of antagonism between the two parties which was reflected in the media. The predominantly negative representation of NATO as an aggressive expansionist alliance and construction of a political frontier between ‘us’ and ‘them’ in a dichotomized world (both discussed in the context of the first two sub-questions) can be seen as a continuation of the Cold War discourse. Moreover, explicit references were made in the articles to the allegedly continued political, economic and information wars. Another kind of allusion to the Cold War was made through what was labeled in the analysis as a ‘Neo-Cold War discourse’: instead of emphasizing the continuation of the Cold War, this discourse focused on the possibility of it reemerging. Finally, another implicit feature of the Cold War was the use of the concept ‘the West’ as a contextual synonym for ‘NATO’, ‘the European Union’, etc. The interchangeability of the concepts implies that they are all constitutive parts of a bigger socio-cultural concept of ‘West’ in its broad sense, which antonymous to ‘Russia’. Arguably, this can be seen as a reminiscence of the Cold War discourse which was build around the bipolar world consisting of ‘the Eastern’ and ‘the Western’ camps.

It is important to emphasize, however, that the Russian contemporary security discourse on NATO should not be seen as identical to that of the Cold War just because it possesses certain features of it. The phenomena and circumstances referred to in it are different; the actors such as NATO are more complex (e.g. see discussion on the United States and ‘New Europe’ as a foe versus ‘Old Europe’ as a partner), the Cold War messages are rather implicit and represent only one facet of the overall discourse.

5.2. Theoretical considerations

This work was based on the interplay between the three main theoretical pillars: language as constitutive part of social reality; media as a type of discourse; and the constructivist understanding of the foreign policy discourse as being embedded in the domestic social and cultural dimensions (see table 1 on p.27).

Adopting this interdisciplinary theoretical stand can be seen as a particular advantage of the present thesis as it combined insights from different discipline fields such as discourse,
media studies, linguistics and political science. On the other hand, reliance on such a wide theoretical background can be seen as problematic, especially considering subjective and interpretative nature of this work. For instance, bearing in mind underpinnings of each theoretical strand during the analysis required much work both from the analyst and the potential reader.

Therefore, this section is meant to explicate links between the theoretical body of the thesis and the practical outcomes of the analysis.

_The first pillar of the study_ was ‘discourse: language as a constitutive part of the social reality’. The main theoretical concept covered in this part was the understanding of language as more than a transparent vehicle of communication. Adopting this view allowed treating the news articles as not neutral. Indeed, the Ria Novosti’s articles which belonged to the ‘analytics and commentary’ category did not provide an impartial examination of the events described in them. A closer look at the language used in the news pieces helped to identify particular ideas and assumptions which together represented a certain version of the social world. Thus, the actors and events during and after the Georgian war were represented from a particular angle, with positive/negative and passive/active roles ascribed to different players. Altogether, these representations formed a particular version of the power balance in the transatlantic security mechanism.

_The second pillar of the study_ was the understanding of the news as a type of discourse. It held that media texts are meant to produce accounts of facts and events and consequently play a role in representation and reflection of reality. Since any representation involves making a claim about the represented, news cannot be regarded as neutral. This point can be seen as related to the first pillar since news is understood here as being a type of discourse.

Furthermore, the analysis revealed a general consensus in the articles regarding the key issues and actors discussed. This came in opposition with the understanding of discourse as a ‘collective concept’ (consisting of many overlapping and competing discourses in the
struggle for dominance) adopted in this work. The explanation suggested in this study is the state ownership of Ria Novosti. Indeed, this study took the view on the media discourse constructed by the state-owned news agency as embedded in the official state discourse. This assumption was confirmed during the analysis. Ideas and perceptions constructed by the articles tended to a great extent reflect the perspective of the government.

The third pillar of this study focused on the securitization theory developed by the Copenhagen school; and suggested constructivist understanding of the foreign policy discourse as being embedded in the domestic social and cultural dimensions.

Firstly, the distinctively negative representations of NATO and the construction of the threat images in the news articles can be regarded as a securitizing move according to the theory of securitization. However, this thesis did not concentrate on the public opinion on NATO and the Georgian war in Russia. Consequently, this study cannot account for whether the securitization move was successful or not.

Finally, the present thesis has empirically demonstrated the embeddedness of the foreign policy discourse in the identity framework. The discourses identified in this analysis tended to draw on both geopolitical and cultural aspects determining relations between Russia and NATO. Thus, while some discourses reflected rationalist interest calculations, others drew on cultural concepts and employed ‘othering’ techniques in the representations of NATO. However, the distinction between ‘geopolitics discourses’ and ‘identity discourses’ is suggested on the theoretical level here; in practice discourses tended to simultaneously combine both features.

5.3. Limitations of the study

A possible limitation which can be ascribed to this study lies in the subjectivity of the analysis and the excessive interpretation on the part of the researcher. This potential critique, however, would be directed not at the particular analysis but at the adoption of the particular interpretative theoretical and methodological frame.
Moreover, another issue which can be seen as a limitation of this study is the language of the source articles. The examples presented for illustration purposes in this study were translated into English. Although the translation was done as close to the original as possible (sometimes even at the expense of the proper English grammar rules), it is still bound to result in a certain extent of deviation from the original source. Thus, translation of the articles presents another instance of the researcher’s interpretation. On the other hand, conduction of analysis in Russian can be seen as an advantage, since it dealt directly with the original data.

Finally, another limitation of this study is the choice of the data for the analysis – Ria Novosti articles. In this thesis, the media discourse constructed by the state-run news agency was regarded in this study as embedded in the official state discourse. However, this study cannot account for the extent of this embeddedness. In other words, although the state and the media discourse are not seen as identical here, this study does not suggest in what ways the Ria Novosti’s accounts deviate from or add to the official governmental perspective.

5.4. **Implications for future research**

This study has concentrated on the DA of news articles produced by a state owned news agency Ria Novosti. An interesting possibility for further analysis would be to conduct a research into other sources (such as privately owned media, opposition media, etc.) in order to identify alternative discourse. A further comparison of findings could present interesting outcomes and put the research at hand into a wider context.

Moreover, a research into public opinion on NATO and NATO-Russia relations would identify how the latter correlates with the Ria Novosti perspective, and, consequently, assess the success of the securitization.
Finally, an important task for future research would be to conduct a similar analysis into the most recent Ria Novosti publications. The relations between NATO and Russia have recently significantly improved, and new grounds for cooperation were established. Therefore, it would be of interest to see whether this improvement has been reflected in the media discourse and whether representations of NATO have changed accordingly.
6. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to analyze Russian foreign policy discourse on NATO during and after the Georgian war adopting constructivist and discourse analytical approach. The analysis adopted Fairclough’s discourse analytical model in which language use is seen as consisting of three dimensions: a text, a discursive practice and a social practice.

Theoretical outcomes

The present thesis was based on the interplay between the three main theoretical pillars: language as constitutive part of social reality; media as a type of discourse; and the constructivist understanding of the foreign policy discourse as being embedded in the domestic social and cultural dimensions.

First of all, by highlighting implicit ideas and predispositions in the articles, this thesis has supported the view on language in the news as not a 'value-free' means of communication. Indeed, the Ria Novosti’s articles belonging to the ‘analytics and commentary’ category did not provide a merely neutral examination of the events described. A closer look at the language used in the news pieces helped to identify particular ideas and assumptions which together represented a certain version of the social world (namely, of the transatlantic security framework) with positive and negative roles allocated to different actors.

Moreover, the media discourse constructed by the state-run news agency was regarded as embedded in the official state discourse in this thesis. This assumption was confirmed during the analysis. Ideas and perceptions constructed by the articles tended to a great extent reflect the perspective of the government. In the context of the securitization theory, the distinctively negative representations of NATO and the construction of the threat images in the news articles can be regarded as a securitizing move.

Finally, the present thesis has empirically demonstrated the embeddedness of the foreign policy discourse in the identity framework. The discourses identified in this analysis tended to draw on both geopolitical and cultural aspects determining relations between Russia and NATO. Thus, while some discourses reflected rationalist interest calculations, others drew on
cultural concepts and employed 'othering' techniques in the representations of NATO. It should be noted, however, that this distinction between ‘geopolitics discourses’ and ‘identity discourses’ is suggested on the theoretical level; in practice discourses tended to simultaneously combine both features.

**Empirical outcomes**

The research has shown that the discourse on NATO constructed in the news articles of Ria Novosti to a great extent reflected the official Russian government’s discourse: Russian position tended to be portrayed as ‘right’ without being questioned, and there was a tendency in the articles to associate with this position, referring to it as ‘ours’. Consequently, the discourse constructed Russian state-owned news agency can be seen as embedded in the Russian official discourse.

The overall unfavorable representation of the organization was evident throughout the analyzed material. This ‘negative-other representation’ served to establish political frontiers between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ of the discourse. In the context of the Georgian war, the questions of the future power balance as well as effective transatlantic security mechanism gained particular prominence for Russia which was reflected in the general discourse. These issues tended to be framed in terms of geopolitics; the regional security mechanism was represented as bipolar, comprising NATO (or ‘the West’ in its broad sense) on the one hand and Russia as the legitimate leader in most of the post-Soviet space, on the other. Such representation possessed distinctive features of the Cold War discourse.

The present research concentrated on the Russian foreign policy discourse instead of employing a more conventional foreign policy analysis. This study may provide additional means for interpreting Russian political identity and strategic thinking with regards to NATO, as well as the particular case of the Georgian conflict. Moreover, it may contribute to the explanation of the overall negative public attitudes towards NATO in Russia. Consequently, this analysis may be seen as complementing a possible rationalist approach by providing new insights into and helping to expand the *understanding* of the conduct of the Russian foreign policy towards NATO.
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