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Dokumentarische Methode und die Interpretation öffentlicher Diskurse

■ **Alex Knoll**

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## Brothers in Arms

### Imagining a Meta-Historical Brotherhood of Georgia and Poland in Polish Media and Political Discourses

**Zusammenfassung:** Dieser Beitrag untersucht die Entstehungskontexte und Effekte der populären polnischen Diskurse über Georgien, die gegenwärtig in den Medien, der Populärkultur, der Politik und in Alltagsgesprächen zirkulieren. Diese werden mit Bourdieus Konzept der Praxis und mit den Heuristiken der traditionellen Critical Discourse Analysis in einen breiten Zusammenhang der historischen Imagination in Polen gestellt. Im Besonderen wird dabei das Konzept der Re-Kontextualisierung verwendet, um die dynamischen Prozesse im Diskurs offen zu legen und mit einfachen linguistischen Mitteln zu zeigen, wie neue Bedeutungen entstehen und stabilisiert werden.

*Schlagwörter:* Polen, Georgien, Brüderlichkeit, Geschichte, Medien, Re-Kontextualisierung

**Summary:** This article traces the origins and effects of the popular Polish discourse on Georgia, which is nowadays encountered in the media, in popular culture, politics and in everyday talk. It positions it within the broader logic of historical imagining in Poland, employing Bourdieu's concept of performativity in discourse and the apparatus of traditional critical discourse analysis. Especially the notion of recontextualization is applied to uncover the dynamics of discourse, showing how, by rather simple linguistic means, new meanings can be created and perpetuated.

*Keywords:* Poland, Georgia, brotherhood, history, media, recontextualization

## Introduction

Since the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe and the break-up of the Soviet Union, the Caucasus has been an object of increased interest in Poland. Especially after the Rose Revolution 2003 and the ensuing rise of president Mikheil Saakashvili to power, the bilateral relations of Georgia and Poland strongly intensified (Wyciszkiewicz 2008, p. 236). The Russo-Georgian war 2008, president Lech Kaczyński's direct involvement in Georgian political affairs and his legendary friendship with Mikheil Saakashvili resulted in Georgia becoming an ever more interesting and fashionable topic to talk about in Poland.

Since then, many associations of Georgia enthusiasts and self-proclaimed experts on the Caucasus-related issues emerged; Georgian restaurants, film and music festivals as well as various other events became an everyday sight in the bigger cities of Poland. Travel agencies started offering holiday packages in Georgia; even specializing in sending tourists to this one destination only seems economically lucrative enough as the existence of numerous travel agencies specialized in Georgia/the Caucasus shows. Georgian restaurants prosper, even a chain restaurant offering Georgian food emerged. Travelogues,

books on Georgian cuisine, Georgian traditions, culture and history fill the bookshelves in bookshops; the authors speak about their travels in the Caucasus on TV, radio and during numerous events organized by different cultural associations. NGO's send volunteers to work in Georgia; politicians travel there on study visits and as advisers to ›share the experience of democratization and systemic transformation‹, as the goal of such trips is often called in official speeches and documents.<sup>1</sup>

The discourse centered around the claim of special relations between Poland and Georgia dominates the public sphere and constitutes the dominant lens through which one can make sense of this ›fashion for Georgia‹. It is not only contemporary international relations that constitute the grounds which are invoked to explain Georgia's popularity in Poland. A deeper communion of national spirits is constructed within the discourse. Not only a political alliance of two states, but also a special connection between two nations and national characters is constructed and used as an element of the rationale behind the so often preached ›strategic partnership‹ between the two countries. This alliance is a logical result of a situation in which ties between Georgia and Poland started to be framed as being of strategic importance, although there is little ›social nor economic substance‹ behind such declarations (Szczepanik 2012, p. 76).

A remote land which was associated with Stalin, Beria, tea production and Black Sea holidays for Soviet party dignitaries at most (with the Polish hit song *Batumi* from 1968 being the most illustrative example of this association chain), suddenly started to be perceived as a ›brotherly nation‹.<sup>2</sup> Together with, for example, the Ukraine, it entered the category of ›our Eastern European neighbourhood‹, for which it was necessary to secure NATO membership, or, at least, a Membership Action Plan, for which Poland unsuccessfully lobbied during the Bucharest NATO Summit in 2008 (Szczepanik 2012, p. 71).

The present paper deals with this discourse in order to filter out its major components. It then positions them on the background of the mainstream Polish historical narrative after the end of Communism. By doing this, I am interested in how history is used to construct an image of a brotherly nation. This question is the more interesting as Georgia was never before in the history of Poland interpreted in this way. For the most part, it was virtually absent from any historical narrative.<sup>3</sup> What are the components and justifi-

- 1 For a taste of the Polish development discourse with regard to Georgia, one may browse through the website of the Polish Embassy in Tbilisi, where the first goal of the development aid is defined as ›supporting systemic transformation, therein stable state structures and market economy‹. Polish Development Aid Fund granted almost 7.000.000 PLN worth funding for different Polish organizations active in Georgia in 2013 (Działalność w 2013r.). In its reports, it claims ›expert knowledge‹ in systemic reform which Poland acquired from the West after ›rejecting communism‹ and ›choosing freedom‹ (Nowakowska/Kończak 2010, p. 5).
- 2 *Batumi* was a hit performed by the female vocal ensemble Filipinki. Another example of sporadic Georgia's presence in Polish popular discourse may be the figure of Grigoriy, a Georgian fellow-soldier of the Polish tank crew fighting Germans as part of the Polish 1<sup>st</sup> Army formed in USSR in 1944, portrayed in a legendary TV series *Four tank-men and a dog*.
- 3 A compact and comprehensive overview of the Polish historical narrative and its myths was provided by Davies (1997, p. 141).

cations invoked by various actors within the discourse that posits this special brotherly alliance between Georgia and Poland?

I seek to throw some light on the process of constructing this alliance, which I understand as an effect of discursive evolution triggered by certain political climate in Poland after 1989 and a consequence of concrete symbolic actions of Polish and, to a lesser extent, Georgian political figures.

## Theoretical Framework

This analysis is set within the conceptual boundaries of critical discourse analysis. Fairclough's three-dimensional framework for discourse analysis is especially important for my work. According to this model, every communicative event can be interpreted on three levels: it is a text, a discursive practice and a social practice at the same time (Fairclough 2003, p. 73). The relation between concrete texts and broader social practices is mediated through discursive practice (Jørgensen/Phillips 2002, p. 69). Therefore, my linguistic analysis of specific means and ways of talking about Georgia in Poland concentrates on examining the already existing discourses found in Polish media texts (the actual *discursive practice*), their historical origins and implications for contemporary social practices.

Of special importance for my work is the social semiotic theory which emphasizes the social and political dimensions of language and language analysis. Based on work of the father of systemic-functional linguistics M.K. Halliday (2004), this approach to language stresses its potential to shape society and the ideological/political significance of linguistic choices made by speakers (Kress 1985). According to this approach, world is not only represented in language, but actually constructed by it. Language is understood as a set of semiotic resources available to speakers who choose to use them in particular ways. It both creates certain dispositions in people as well as offers more independent ways of interpreting the world (Machin/Mayer 2012, p. 17). This approach to language is different from Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory in that it allows for the existence of societal forces that do not have a solely discursive character; they are viewed as able to shape and influence the discursive construction of social reality (Jørgensen/Phillips 2002, p. 62).

The analysis proposed here makes additional use of the notion of performativity as developed by Bourdieu. A performative discourse has an immediate effect on the social reality: it produces what it apparently designates (Bourdieu 1991). This is achieved by the symbolic power inherent to language itself combined with the specific authority of the person/entity who uses it. My analysis translates Bourdieu's concept of performative discourse into the framework of CDA and uses it as a basis for developing a linguistic toolkit used for analysing Polish media texts. The paper argues that discursive practices – concrete instances of discourse – provide a regime for the production and reception of meaning. A set of specific *meanings* can be constructed and perpetrated by introducing new categories into an existing discourse; or, as in the Polish/Georgian case, creating

them from scratch by recontextualizing and reshaping elements from different discourses.

A discourse with performative powers can be used to redefine existent social categories, especially with regard to identity and identity struggles. Bourdieu gives an illustrative example of how new national categories can be brought into being:

»The fact of calling ›Occitan‹ the language spoken by those who are called ›Occitans‹ because they speak that language (a language that nobody speaks, properly speaking, because it is merely the sum of a very great number of different dialects) and calling the region (in the sense of physical space) ›Occitanie‹, thus claiming to make it exist as a ›region‹ or a ›nation‹ [...] is no ineffectual fiction.« (Bourdieu 1991, p. 223)

In fact, by the authority of the person making such a statement (a scholar, politician, expert etc.) a new entity (for example, Georgia defined in a particular way) can be symbolically brought into being and then begin to operate within the borders of discourse. Performative statements seek to bring about what they state (*ibid.*, p. 225). This framework is of use while trying to understand how a new social category or a discursive notion actually comes to life. In case of the representation of Georgia in Poland, the concept of performativity sheds light on the origins of the belief that the Polish and Georgian nations share many common features and are historically united in a special way.

I propose a linguistic toolkit centered around the concepts of recontextualization and overlexicalization. The notion of recontextualization (Fairclough 2003, pp. 139 f.) is especially well suited for the examination of a discourse that, as the analysis will reveal, is built from units of an established historical narrative (of freedom fight and oppression). Overlexicalization (Fowler 1979, p. 69; Machin/Mayer 2012, p. 37), on the other hand, goes in line with the performativity of language: by repeating a certain set of propositions over and over, it allows for this set to establish itself as a dominant one.

## Materials

Virtually all materials that I came across so far in the course of researching Georgia's representations in Poland extensively deal with concepts such as »national characters« and nation. This paper aligns itself with Anderson's concept of a nation (1983) which stresses its constructed character. Collective imagining of belonging to a national community became possible in the age of print capitalism (since the invention of the printing press and spread of market economy in Europe in the Modern Age). The printing press and the use of an everyday vernacular language were the first conditions needed for a development of discourses of nationality and nationalism.

Today, the role of the printing press is to a large extent performed by the Internet. It is a virtual space where feelings of belonging to a national community can be shared with others, with a power to recreate and reproduce national communities in the virtual world (Eriksen 2007).

In line with that assumption, the materials I am analyzing stem from the Internet, too. In tracing the elements of the discursive construction of Georgia in Poland, I use texts

from newspapers and blogs available on the Internet, together with other materials like book advertisements and reviews.

The data for this analysis was selected based on the topic, following the principles of purposive homogenous sampling (Owuegbuzie/Leech 2007, p. 112). The keywords for the google search were *Gruzja Polska* (Georgia Poland); the search was performed using the Google search engine's Polish language version: google.pl. The keyword was formulated in this way as the aim of the study is to trace the elements that form the discourse of a special relationship between those two countries and their nationals.

Out of the retrieved texts, 14 were subject to a critical linguistic and discourse analysis. This number is an arbitrary delimitation which was needed due to the nature of the present paper. The texts were selected with their representativeness in mind. The news items stem from established daily newspapers of various ideological orientations; the analytic articles stem from pages of political think-thanks and academic institutions; the blog entries are taken from travel blogs. One article is an original travel blog entry which was then used on a website of a political think-thank. All materials stem from the time period 2008–2014.

The various genres of the analysed materials as well as various political orientations of the news outlets and authors enable an attempt to generalize my findings. As the discourses and traits found in most of the data are more or less the same, while the analysed sources are so diverse, one may claim, with due cautiousness, that the results of the study point to a wider social practice that crosses the boundaries of particular ideologies.

The emblematic characteristics of the materials make it possible to operationalize the concept of hegemony in the analysis. Gramsci understands hegemony as a non-violent production of consent in societies; shaping people's view of the world and attitudes does not necessarily involve coercion, especially in modern societies. Focus on language can help uncover the »daily and molecular operations of power« in the ways we understand and interpret the reality around us (Ives 2004, p. 71). Discourse manufactured in a non-coercive way becomes hegemonic in that it starts to constitute the »dominant horizon of social orientation« for most people in a society (Torfing, in Rear 2013, pp. 7 f.). Mass media is one of the spheres best suited for production and reproduction of a dominant, hegemonic discourse (Strinati 1995, p. 168).

It is, consequently, possible to produce a common belief by using only discursive means. My analysis is based on this premise and traces the production of a particular discourse in Polish media and the public sphere. The selected materials exemplify the various traits and sides of this discourse.

## Analysis

The year 2008 marks a very important symbolic event: the Russo-Georgian war. Judging by the selected materials, the Polish engagement in the war was symbolically significant for the emergence of the narrative of brotherhood of the Georgian and Polish nations. The main reason for this brotherhood is discursively defined as fighting the common enemy.

In line with the ancient proverb »the enemy of my enemy is my friend«, Polish president Lech Kaczyński announced on the 12th of August 2008, in the midst of the war, during a rally in Tbilisi that Poland is there for Georgia *in order to take up the fight*. This rally was transmitted by Polish and Georgian TV and widely commented later in the press. Alongside other Western-oriented presidents of post-Soviet and post-Communist countries (Lithuania, Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia), he expressed his support for the Georgian cause. The Russian-Georgian war provided a discursive ground for the articulation of an anti-Russian sentiment inherent in the ideological foundations of Kaczyński's foreign policy. It also provided a real proof for the claim of this political wing in Poland that Russia again had imperial ambitions. Kaczyński announced in Tbilisi that *Russia seeks to restore its dominance* (Wybierzpolske, 2014); he further expressed his disillusionment with the Western reaction to the war and defined the role of the emerging »New Europe«, whose mission is to fight the Russian threat.<sup>4</sup> In doing that, he not only constructed a divide between »old« and »new« Europe, but also positioned himself and the »new« Europe (the in-group) on the Georgian side (as opposed to Russia). This act performed in Tbilisi can be regarded as a symbolic birthday and the Georgian capital itself as a birthplace of the discourse which I would like to call »Brothers in Arms«: a discourse about two brotherly nations fighting the same enemy throughout history.

Indeed, the use of history within the discourse is striking. The war rhetorics from Tbilisi were surprising to many commentators even in Poland (13, 14). Consequently, a need emerged to provide more ground for the postulated alliance between Georgia and Poland. The best instrument of constructing this alliance proved to be history.

Symbolic historical events of the 19th and 20th century that form the basis of Polish identity construction have been recontextualized; almost all of them received a new element whose significance is highlighted in the analysed materials. In Fairclough's terms, recontextualization stands for incorporating elements from a specific context into another context (Fairclough 2003, p. 139). Where such operation is observed, one can reconstruct particular principles of recontextualisation; the principle found within the »Brothers in Arms« narrative is a simple addition of a Georgian element into symbolic events of the Polish historical narrative.

We learn that Georgian officers *were murdered in the Katyń forest* (5) alongside Polish officers; they *fought in the September 1939 campaign* (2) against the German attack and later in the *Warsaw Uprising* (2); *their graves are in Monte Cassino* and *in Katyń* (2). The very mention of those places evokes associations of the fight for the existence of the Polish nation during WWII. The passive voice exemplifies the victimization of Poland; obviously, if officers were murdered, there has to be a murderer out there, and it has been confirmed that the executions were performed by the Russian NKVD.

The word choices are also telling; invoking blood, suffering and freedom fight that two nations supposedly undertake together has a power to create an image of the com-

4 Interestingly, the notion of the »New Europe« was first coined by the US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld and originally designated countries supporting the US' vision of global security materialized in Iraq (Osica 2004, p. 301).



monly shed blood. Blood symbolically stands for a community, an inherited genealogy. Although Poles and Georgians clearly do not »share the same blood«, they nevertheless shed the same blood and become almost transcendently connected in this way. Georgians *paid off the Polish hospitality with their blood* (3).

The blood–connection can be exploited even further and used to support the claim of sharing a common ethnic background. It is left for the reader to decide whether this may be true, but again, the authority of the actor allegedly claiming such ethnic connection is significant. It is none other than Adam Mickiewicz, the literary prophet of the Polish liberation fight and famous Romantic poet, who is said to have *believed in the Caucasian ancestry of the Polish gentry and considered Georgians as a brotherly nation* (12).

The imagery of blood and soil is supplemented with extensive invoking of fight and fighting. The overlexicalization of fight is visible in almost all analysed materials. Examples include descriptions of a small contingent of Georgian officers serving in the Polish army after emigrating from the short-lived independent Georgia which was incorporated by the Soviet Union in 1921: *Poland was their second fatherland; They fought in September 1939, and later in the Home Army [...], in the Warsaw Uprising* (2).

The underlined symbolic events and names form a part of the Polish martyrological narrative that shapes the public understanding of what it means to be a Pole. This discourse concentrates on the suffering and sacrifice of the Polish nation throughout history, understood as a messianic martyrdom (Zubrzycki, 2013, p. 112). Once Georgians are represented as an active part of this suffering, one can incorporate this new layer to the historical narrative.

In the data one encounters a claim of shared cultural and historical features that further legitimize the brotherhood narrative. Although in most of the materials only one common historical feature appears (Russian oppression), the claims are always formulated in the plural, thus creating an impression of a multitude of »common features«: *perennial friendship and shared cultural features* (7), *historical facts that connect two countries* (6), *the last 100 years of common fortunes, history and loyal friendship between Georgians and Poles* (5).

The Georgian officers that served in the Polish Army in the 1920s become the central element around which the narrative is built, they are the *Polish Georgians, totally immersed in all aspects of life in Poland* (8). The discourse uses well-known »winged words« from the national identity discourse like the unofficial motto of all Polish revolutionaries since the 19th century *for our freedom and yours* (2).<sup>5</sup>

Another interesting example of a recontextualized cultural commonplace is the Polish-Hungarian proverb stemming from the 18th century: *Poles and Hungarians cousins be*, which itself is a part of a greater narrative centered around a stereotyped view of Hun-

5 *For our freedom and yours* (*Za naszą i waszą wolność*) first appeared during the November Uprising against the tsarist Russia (1831) and is attributed to Joachim Lelewel. It was an unofficial motto of various Polish groups fighting within the independence movements of the 19th century and also during the World War II.

gary in Poland. In this view, both Hungary and Poland are culturally close and both of them lost their independence to greater powers (Tazbir 1991, p. 161).

This proverb is repeatedly used in the headlines of Georgia-related news and blog entries; it is enough to replace the word *Hungarian* with *Georgian*, and a new proverb is created that later becomes a ready-to-use reservoir of meaning. Google search reveals 1760 occurrences of the new proverb. Because of the common knowledge of this proverb (children actually learn it at school), such a wordplay can quickly spread, as it indeed did in different types of media reporting on Georgia.

A discourse that instrumentalizes history and claims a shared past is on a constant quest for continuity. Linguistically, the continuity is established by overt naming; Poland and Georgia are *friends for centuries*, they are *like family* (9). Such statements are uttered with high modality and treated as givens, without much elaboration. Even in materials that admit no close historical relations between the two countries, the claim about a special community of values and national characters is made. Historical topoi of the chivalrous Polish gentry and stereotypical catalogues of its character traits are compared and equalled to the Georgian stereotypical features of hospitality, chivalry, religiousness, pride and love for freedom (9, 10).

No explanation is needed for the claims made within the logic of the discourse. On the contrary, as the national character is something not easily definable, it is often enough just to »feel« it. *I cannot explain it, but I have the feeling that Poles and Georgians can find a common language* (10), as the author of a book about Georgia's culture writes in his article.

One of the common givens of the discourse is the supposed community of national characters of the two nations. *Poland and Georgia are tied together by a shared culture* (7), claims the Polish Promethean Club. What exactly the shared cultural elements are is not elaborated upon. Common cultural traditions are again invoked when the association explains the meaning of its name. Interestingly, there is no reference to the actual Polish political project of Prometheism, which was aimed at destabilizing the Soviet Union by supporting independence movements in the non-Russian Soviet republics in the 1920s-1930s (Kwiecień 2014, p. 336).

Whether openly or not, the long forgotten language of Prometheism is used again to make sense of Georgia in Poland. Although Georgia is exoticized in the discourse, like in the title of the book *The unknown Georgia* (5), it is also a close ally with which one shares the eternal enmity towards Russia. Georgia is unknown and known at the same time (consider the subtitle of the same book *The shared fortunes of Georgians and Poles*), but the ultimate Other of this narrative is Russia.

It is Russia against which both Poland and Georgia defend themselves; it is against Russia that the Polish and Georgian officers are fighting, and it is the Soviet NKVD that murders them. Despite of Germany's role in the World War II, this country is never mentioned in any of the articles that deal with the dramatic events of 1939-1945 in Poland. Instead, the discourse creates a mythological space oriented towards the East, within which the World War II was mainly about fighting the Soviet Union, with Germany being virtually absent from the scene.

A good example of self-imagining within the Polish discourse is the unprecedentedly significant role attributed to Poland in both provoking and later stopping the Russo-Georgian war. One day after the break-up of the war, a Polish tabloid shouts in a headline: *Russians, hands off Georgia!* (4). What follows is a historical account of a *Russia which tries to restore its hegemony over Georgia as is angered by the Polish-Georgian friendship* (4).

Interestingly, both right and left-wing publications display a similar perception of the Russia's role in the war 2008. The only existing left-wing Polish weekly *Przegląd* criticizes Saakashvili for siding with NATO and USA, but, on the other hand, uses words with a clearly pejorative connotation with respect to Russia: the Russian generals, for example, are portrayed as *inciting Ossetian separatists to war* (11). The difference between right and left wing media outlets lies mainly in the criticism towards Kaczyński's role in the conflict.

It is quite clear that the newspapers/websites/blogs that published the texts analyzed in the present article represent distinctively different political orientations. Whereas *Przegląd* is an outspoken left-wing magazine, *Wprost* is known for its right-wing ideological sympathies; *Tygodnik Powszechny* belongs to the tradition of liberal Catholic intellectualism, and the authors of the album *The Unknown Georgia* state that the roots of their approach to history go back to the times of their active engagement in the anti-Communist opposition movement *Solidarność* in the 1980s. Whereas a qualitative study on a small textual sample cannot account for all discursive shifts in the Polish-Georgian brotherhood narrative, the diversity of ideological positions points to a general agreement on the special significance of the postulated Polish-Georgian alliance in public discourse.

## Conclusion

The analysed materials clearly draw a very one-sided picture of Georgian-Polish relations. The sample was purposively selected in order to enable a closer look at the specific means which make it possible to construct an image of a remote and unknown land as a close ally and »friend« with which one shares common national characteristics, historical features and values. The dominating historical narrative of the suffering and freedom fight of the Polish nation, which is a typical Romantic element of Polish literature and journalism that permeates the common interpretations of Poland's role in global history, is recontextualized in order to enrich it by a Georgian element. This martyrological narrative is widely accepted in society (Davies 1997, p. 144). Consequently, using the well-established topoi, this historical narrative is likely to fall on a productive ground.

Indeed, the materials analysed here, together with the wider context of a growing popularity of Georgia in Poland, point to a construction of a shared history which makes it possible to perceive this country not only as a close political ally, but also as a »brotherly nation«. Certainly, not everybody in Poland agrees with the deeply anti-Russian rhetorics of the Law and Justice government but not many dare to oppose the particular interpretation of history that is invoked by the discourse. It is precisely here where the hegemonic side of the discourse can be seen best: years of invoking a one-sided historical narrative

in the public discourse, schools and the media result with an emergence of an almost unconscious acceptance of the desired narrative in society. Consequently, the Russophobic fundamentals of Poland's foreign policy, when packed into a historical narrative that goes back to the 18th century and the partitions of Poland, cannot easily be dismissed. In addition to that, Russia is known to have been used in the role of the symbolic Other in defining the Polish national identity from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards (Zarycki 2004). The Polish national identity discourse has used Russia as a negative point of reference, often orientalizing it and presenting as ›the East‹ towards which Poland could form its self-definition of belonging to the Western cultural sphere. As Zarycki puts it,

»Russia is often presented as a barbarian, dangerous country, a constant, unified threat to Poland. Many Polish writers imbue Russia with an entrenched imperial character and an innate disposition to conduct aggressive behavior toward other nations and states. Poland is typically depicted as its eternal victim. [...] and yet, oddly, Russia is often seen as [...] a country about which Poland claims the role of expert.« (Zarycki 2012)

The Russian-Georgian war has been framed as a part of the eternal fight against Russia in which Poland has a moral obligation to take part. It has opened a possibility of constructing Georgia as a brotherly country and Georgians as a close, brotherly nation. At a time when the discourse gained prominence in the media, it certainly served the interests of Kaczyński's particular understanding of foreign policy. Interestingly, Poland's and Georgia's actual alliance on the ground during the US invasion and occupation of Iraq did not result in the emergence of the brotherhood discourse already in 2003-2004. Both countries participated in the Coalition of the Willing in Iraq, with Georgia eventually deploying the third-largest contingent after US and Great Britain (Hamilton 2010, p. 206). Poland was also heavily present in Iraq, which led to it being dubbed »Europe's Trojan horse« and the ultimate exponent of US' interest in the »New Europe« (Osica 2004, p. 301).

However, this episode is not invoked within the brotherhood-discourse today, although the historical basic ingredients that one could make use of are all present already in the Iraq's case. The Polish engagement in Iraq was framed as a liberating mission, ›a good mission‹ bringing freedom to subjugated peoples (Kavalski/Zolkos 2007, p. 380). Historical events evoked in order to justify its policies were taken from the martyrological Polish narrative of oppression and freedom fight, in much the same way as it was later the case with the Polish-Georgian brotherhood narrative. President Kwaśniewski did not only compare Iraq's situation under Saddam Hussein's rule to the partitions of Poland in the 18th century, but also implied that Hussein's regime was modelled on the Soviet one, and thus immoral and in need of external action to disassemble it (ibid., p. 382).

Despite the historical basis of the foreign policy discourses in Poland (Osica 2004, p. 302), which especially underscore the fight against imperial and communist occupants, and Georgia's similar framing of its actions under Saakashvili (Shatirishvili 2010, p. 241) as well as their actual military cooperation on the ground, the Polish-Georgian brotherhood discourse did not emerge in its full force until another major event, namely the Russo-Georgian war.

The situation of 2008 seems to simply have been much clearer as to its historical parallels; the common fight against an imperial power (Russia) was a readily available motif easily readable for the Polish media audiences. The brotherhood discourse could flourish aided by the foreign policy apparatus of president Kaczyński and his Chancellery and the popular mobilization of the Polish society exemplified by demonstrations, fundraising campaigns and other initiatives aimed at raising aid for Georgia after the war broke out in August 2008.

Today, 7 years on from the war, the Polish-Georgian brotherhood discourse continues to exist independently. It has grown into a fully developed social practice, with websites, NGOs, clubs and associations dedicated to Georgia and Polish-Georgian cooperation. This performative effect of the discourse is its most striking feature. The ideological underpinnings, despite the government change and Kaczyński's death, remained the same. If it was not for the existence of Russia, and its discursive construction as a threat that goes back hundreds of years, there probably would not be any Polish-Georgian brotherhood today either.

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