

ISSA Proceedings 2014 ~ Analyzing Political Discourse In Georgia: A Critical Discourse- Analytical Perspective On Political Imageries And Means-Goal Arguments

Abstract: Georgia has undergone remarkable socio-economic changes and political unrest on its difficult road to statehood. Re-establishing itself from the collapsed Soviet Union as an independent, sovereign state has been a painful process. This paper looks at number of speeches delivered by the political leader of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili (presidential term: 2004-2013) in order to analyze argumentative public communication, focusing on how practical arguments in favour of the advocated policies are developed in the selected speeches.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, Georgia, practical argumentation

1. Introduction

This article analyzes Georgian political discourse, namely annual report speeches of the Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili (presidential term 2004-2013) delivered at the Parliament of Georgia. It draws particular attention to practical arguments and rhetorical devices used in the selected political texts. Although President Saakashvili is acknowledged as a charismatic and persuasive public speaker, I argue that his speeches reveal lack of argumentative communication and fail to suggest a clear political vision while strongly advocating policies.

Over the past two decades, republic of Georgia has undergone remarkable socio-economic and political changes. Re-establishing itself from the collapsed Soviet Union as an independent state has been a painful and rather complex process. The recent history of the country has included the overthrow of communism, revolutionary change of the government and the first constitutional transfer of power through elections (leading to the so called 'cohabitation'). Georgia's shift from a former soviet republic into an independent state has been analysed within

various disciplines. Historical timeline and accompanying processes have been observed in terms of social or political studies, identity and ideology related debate and other fields of research. In recent times, there has been growing interest in applying discourse analysis to study politics and power. According to the Constitution of Georgia, "The president is authorised to address people and the Parliament, and once a year submits a report to parliament on the most important issues concerning the state". The present paper looks into 7 institutional the speeches delivered by the president of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili to the supreme legislative body of the country. I am primarily interested in identifying practical arguments in the selected political texts and analyzing relevant schemes pursuant to Critical Discourse Analysis. This paper addresses the following questions: What particular argument schemes is the arguer using to justify particular lines of action (policies)? How can these arguments be evaluated from a dialectical and rhetorical perspectives?

The article will first discuss analytical framework of the research, that is of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 2010) and particularly the more recent version of CDA that gives primacy to practical argumentation and deliberation in political discourse (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012). Critical Discourse Analysis is especially relevant due to the focus it has on texts and its encouragement to have a dialogue between disciplines while conducting analysis. Second, I continue with the analysis of 7 institutional speeches with specific attention to practical arguments in favour of the advocated policies – how practical argumentation scheme is used to legitimize foreign policy and implemented and/or planned reforms.

Analysis shows that not only are the premises poorly related to the claim for action, but are also frequently insufficient and unnecessary too. I suggest that vague representations of the goal premise, hence vague political visions or imageries, are characteristic of the practical arguments being made, and the measures that allegedly need to be taken are often insufficient and sometimes unnecessary. There is a complete absence of alternative courses of action and critical examination of such alternatives, and hasty generalisation is one of the most characteristic argumentative fallacies in all seven reports. This seems to correlate with an absence of clear political vision as to which particular goals Georgia ought to be pursuing and what means are, realistically, most likely to deliver a range of desirable goals. Certain common elements found in all seven

speeches is a special contribution to this research. Analysis will proceed on focusing on these common characteristics found in all speeches. The final part of the article is dedicated to summarizing main findings and lessons learned.

2. Methodology

The analytical framework of the paper is that of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 2010) and particularly the more recent version of CDA that gives primacy to *practical argumentation* and deliberation in political discourse (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012). Being of highly interdisciplinary character, "Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality" (Van Dijk 2001, 352).

In their recent book "Political Discourse Analysis a Method for Advanced Students" (2012) Isabela Fairclough and Norman Fairclough describe practical reasoning as a discussion regarding future actions and suggest showing (reflecting and analysing) practical reasoning as part of political discourse:

"The structure of practical reasoning that we suggest is the following (Figure 2.1), where the hypothesis that action A might enable the agent to reach his goals (G), starting from his circumstances (C), and in accordance with certain values (V), leads to the presumptive claim that he ought to do A. It is often the case that the context of action is seen as a 'problem' (and is negatively evaluated in view of the agent's existing values or concerns) and the action is seen as the solution that will solve the problem. As the conclusion that the action might be the right means to achieve the goal or solve the agent's problem follows only presumptively, we have represented the link from premises to conclusion by means of a dotted line." (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012).

Thinking of this scheme as one of the most relevant frameworks for analyzing set initiatives in political context, I will apply the above described structure in analysing argumentative communication in annual report texts.

3. Annual reports

2003 was a turning point in the modern history of the republic of Georgia. On November 23rd, a peaceful revolution took place when thousands of demonstrators were led by a young and a charismatic leader Mikheil Saakashvili.

In January 2004 Saakashvili was elected president of Georgia with 96% of the vote. The first annual report delivered by President Saakashvili to the supreme legislative body of the country took place in February 2005.

Introductory part of the 2005 report's text is quite extensive and includes some argumentative discussion. The speech contains 3480 words out of which 1171 are of initiatory character. By the beginning of the report, president develops a rhetorically rich comparative analysis: what did Georgia look like before the Rose Revolution and what it turned into due to the democracy-promoted efforts made by the new government. The narrative highlights "Our achievements" on the one hand and "Georgia a year ago" in contrast. While developing this opposition the speaker applies simple argumentative structure: "Georgia was a country with no defensive capacity - there was not a single tank and not even a bullet for an hour fight. We had an army in several month hunger." The speaker's statement about military weakness of the country is supported by two premises: the lack of relevant equipment and poor conditions for the soldiers. Achievements of the year, on the other hand, are presented by using specific, detailed cases and examples. Each of the successful fields has its own "concrete hero". While illustrating successful governance through individual names (and stories) may serve as a powerful persuasive strategy, the risk of developing a fallacy - hasty generalization increases. For instance, the speaker emphasizes the achievements of the finance police through the case of Kvemo Kartli (administrative region in Georgia) department, names the head of operational department, greets him in front of the public and expresses gratitude towards him personally. The same strategy is applied to show the success in the field of education, security and law enforcement - patrol police activities.

One of the fundamental issues highlighted in Georgia's development agenda, especially after the Rose Revolution, has been related to European and Euro-Atlantic integration. Strengthening cooperative links with NATO has been perceived as one of the best options for enhancing the country's security and developing realistic perspectives on territorial integrity. Georgia has two breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Osetia, consequently international support in consolidating the state is of utmost importance.

The text of 2005 report, however, is quite limited in terms of elaborating arguments in favour of the implemented foreign policy. NATO integration program is presented as part of the general, so to say „Georgia now and before“

argument, part of the rhetorically rich sequence of statements:

1.

“No one should question our presence there. Georgia must participate in the processes because our country should restore its territorial integrity through peace. We are not a country in ordinary condition. We are the state that seeks international support today, as never before, to implement peaceful processes. In order to gain peace, it is critically important that a country is strong. Army is a constituent part of it. In summer, during antidrug operation 16 of our best soldiers died. The first woman instructor, Ms. Ia, trained according to American program on Krtsanisi polygon is present here today” (Annual report 2005).

In spite of the issue’s priority, the speaker does not provide even primary explanatory information on peace building activities and operations. Connection between Georgia’s participation in the process and restoring country’s territorial integrity is rather vague. This seems to underestimate the importance of thorough discussion before claiming a specific action. Gratitude and appreciation towards soldiers is the major context in which the speaker discusses Georgia’s engagement in NATO operations. The sentence on dramatic consequences of the operations (death of 16 soldiers) is followed by an innovation, a modernisation concept (for example a woman soldier trained in accordance to American program) and messages tapping into patriotism, thus disguising (or preventing) alternative assessment of the action. The passage, I believe, serves to create an emotional attitude towards Georgian soldiers’ involvement in NATO operations in the Middle East.

Goal: “Our country should restore territorial integrity.”

To achieve the set goal the speaker offers to continue participation in NATO peace building operations.

Claim of action: “Georgia must be the part of these processes”.

Circumstances are presented radically: “We are not the state in an ordinary situation”

The value premise behind this short argumentative text is a concern for territorial integrity.

Something that is not explicitly discussed in the provided example above is that, in order to get support from the international alliance, any state needs access to its membership (which Georgia does not have so far). The challenging questions to the claim for action would be: Is participation in peace building operations

necessary and sufficient for restoring territorial integrity of Georgia? Is the practice of participation linked to becoming a NATO member state at all? Does Georgia's quest for NATO integration guarantee facilitation of processes on the long road to alliance membership? According to the information provided at the official web-page of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, (www.mfa.gov.ge) Georgia became the participant of NATO Partnership for Peace program. As part of the program, Alliance member and partner states arrange trainings and quarter teachings. Georgia is actively included in the seminars and conferences dedicated to modern security challenges. The country made an official application in NATO Prague summit in 2002. Another important information is that Georgia contributes to ISAF - International Security Assistance Force - operation. Currently, as a non-member state, it has the second largest military contingent in Afghanistan. In fact, considering the role taken and participation scale, shedding more light on the claimed actions could have lead to more rational judgement. Georgia's integration to NATO still remains a highly contested issue. While praising Georgia's reform efforts, achievements and outstanding role in the international alliance operations, the world leaders' comments challenge the dynamic perspectives of integration: "There are "no immediate plans" for expanding NATO to include Georgia and Ukraine, U.S. President Barack Obama said at the press conference after the EU-US summit in Brussels March 26 (2014)" - Reports daily news online service www.Civil.ge. The below quote (cited on the same online news service) provides incentives on why the question of integration remains debated: "I know that Russia, at least on background, has suggested that one of the reasons they've been concerned about Ukraine was potential NATO membership. On the other hand, part of the reason that the Ukraine has not formally applied for NATO membership is because of its complex relationship with Russia. I don't think that's going to change anytime soon, obviously," President Obama said.

President Saakashvili touches upon Georgia's territorial integrity, security related issues and a foreign policy as interconnected topics in every annual report delivered in the Parliament. Most of the time, in my view, relations between the set goals and means of their implementation are fairly represented. Practical argument on Georgia's foreign policy in the report of 2006 is as follows:

2.

Circumstance premise: "Georgia has many international friends. On the other hand, they (implying enemies) want to annex territory of our country. We move to

NATO standards. Very soon Georgia's border will be the borders of NATO. Today I am confident to say something that I would be unable to say yesterday- Georgia is one step away from NATO."

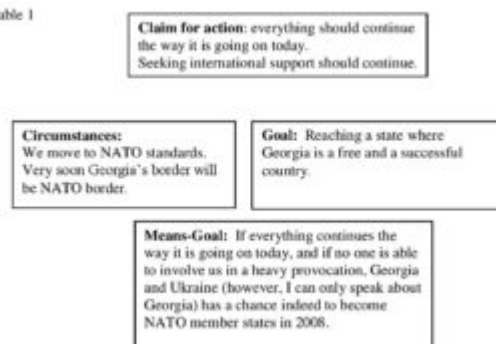
Goal: becoming a NATO member state. Reaching a state where Georgia is a free and a successful country.

Means - goal: identifying concrete means that will deliver this goal, however, is difficult. One of the suggestions of reaching the goal is the following: "If everything continues the way it is going on today, and if no one is able to involve us in a heavy provocation, Georgia and Ukraine (however, I can only speak about Georgia) has a chance indeed to become NATO member states in 2008. And this year we can become official candidates for NATO membership". Increasing awareness among international community about the situation in Georgia is presented as another means goal/ another opportunity to reach the goal/: "They should know that the teacher from Gali can be arrested when her/his student expresses "Long live to my country".

Gali is a district in the breakaway region of Abkhazia that has ethnic Georgian population. According to the Human Rights Watch report, "About 47,000 displaced people have returned to their homes in Gali district. But the Abkhaz authorities have erected barriers to their enjoyment of a range of civil and political rights". The document highlights restricted access to Georgian - language education in the region. The above mentioned means-goal quotation refers to the violation of rights of the ethnic Georgian teacher in Gali district, the threat that any teacher may face. This may implicitly indicate that if Georgia spreads information about the circumstances in breakaway region among the international communities, and sheds light on the human rights conditions, then inequalities will be revealed and Georgia's need of better international protection will become more explicit.

Claim for action: Seeking international support should continue. The launched initiatives and policies should continue. Through this judgement, I think the president attempts to justify the actions taken by the team he represents and advocate the continuation of the same rout.

Table 1



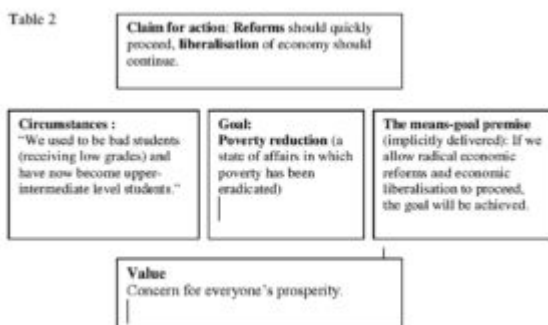
Comparative statement on “Georgia before the Rose Revolution and now” continues to retain leading position in the annual report text of 2006. Like in previous case, this time as well it is enriched with stylistic devices. The president begins his speech by questioning: “Where did we start from? Where do we stand now? Where are we going?” The rest of the text fits into this scheme and increases pathetic background with various stylistic and lexical devices, such as: „We *began* from the point where Georgia, as a state had its existence *finished*... We *started* from the point where nations and states end their being”. „We need to wound our healings.” *Necessity of continuing reforms and liberalisation* is a key claim for action in the 2006 report script. Circumstance premise in this practical argument is exceptionally extended: 11 different directions asserting economic development can be distinguished in it. Sometimes simple argument schemes are applied within the circumstance premise. Circumstances are described as follows:

1. Impressive economic development;
2. Georgian entrepreneurs can make business in favourable conditions;
3. The country budget accumulated more amount than it has been planned;
4. FDI volume has been increased;
5. GDP has been increased;
6. Inflation decreased;
7. Privatisation has reached unprecedented level;
8. Georgia strengthens its economic ranking internationally;
9. Taxation system has simplified and became orderly;
10. Tourism started to develop;
11. The country's economy is considered as one of the most liberal in the region;

Above all, the circumstance premise is summarised metaphorically: “This means that we used to be bad students (losers, those who receive low grades) and have now become upper-intermediate level students.” Frequent application of stylistic devices asserts once again that the speaker uses maximum language (lexical)

means to have efficient communication and influence audience's attitudes. In this case, for instance, the new governing team is presented as a bright, hardworking student in contrast to what previous government used to be. Through this particular personification device, efforts are made to relate positive concept to the new government, establish and strengthen affirmative attitudes towards „the Georgia after Rose revolution“. The goal premise of the next identified practical argument is poverty reduction – a state of affairs in which poverty has been eradicated. The speaker is quite confident while setting the goal here and provides international organisations' outlooks as a support to this hopeful attitude: „After the year of 2009, According to the World bank and International Organisations' categories, Georgia will not be a poor country any longer. We will leave poverty in the past forever.“ Giving a specific date increases the statement's persuasive affect. Value behind the communication is a concern for everyone's prosperity. According to the text, all major fields of country's development (including development of social services, banking system, education etc.) heavily depend on the realisation of rapid reforms. Everything that a county has achieved so far was a result of reforms. Mainstreaming reform into every field of policy planning is an absolutely necessary means of reaching a goal. The means-goal premise (implicitly) delivered here is the following: if we allow radical economic reforms and economic liberalisation proceed, the goal will be achieved.

Table 2



Even though economic liberalisation and radical reforms in essentially every field are depicted as (almost the only) means to reduce poverty, some analysts question the relevance and outcomes of this policy. The research on "Reforming of Post-Soviet Georgia's Economy in 1991-2011" asserts that "successes in economic reforms were

followed by stagnation, which was particularly exacerbated by the increased scale of corruption. The economic reforms, which were carried out after the —Rose Revolution, are especially interesting. Along with successful reforms of neo-liberal nature, neo-Bolshevik actions became apparent as the Government started openly infringing property rights (Papava 2013). A lot of space is traditionally dedicated to the statement "*Georgia before the Rose Revolution and now*" in the text of 2007 report. The representation is realised through antithesis/ oppositions.

Georgia before 2003:

"A ruined state drawn in the mud of failure"

"Frozen in stagnation, a country left backward"

"Totally corrupted"

"A country with criminal mentality"

"Demoralised, hopeless state on its knees, without any dignity"

Georgia after 2003:

"The world's one of the most dynamically developing country"

"The world's number one reforming state"

"The world's leader in fight against corruption"

"Criminal mentality destroyed"

"Proud, new Georgia"

"Sense of national dignity has returned to people"

Quite often development processes and positive outcomes of new government's reforms are shown through simple argumentative schemes. For instance, while talking about the fairness of updated education system: "Today we live in Georgia, where knowledge is appreciated... Applicants from ordinary families are able to enrol at the universities." This statement is supported by an example, the case of an applicant, who is at the same time attending the annual report presentation. The president greets the young and motivated person. Bringing this one example as a success story may threaten the rational argumentation and may, as in the case illustrated earlier, lead to hasty generalisation fallacy. The same applies to the following part:

"Corruption is not a problem any longer. The day before yesterday, officers at Tax Office were arrested. The operation was named as a 'left pocket' by the prosecutor's office. A whole corruption scheme has been uncovered. Corruption is totally defeated."

Fallacy in this particular case seems to be related to hasty generalisation. It may still be possible that beyond this uncovered scheme, corrupted negotiations take place in the Tax office. Besides, Tax Office case is generalized and is presented as an example applicable to all fields. Argumentative passage from the report text of 2007 states the economic growth of the country.

"Last year a Georgian company - The Bank of Georgia appeared on London Stock exchange. Georgian economy used to be made on Validavkaz and Ergneti flea

markets before. Now it has moved to London stock exchange. This is an indicator of our country's growth."

By the time of delivering this particular report, Newspaper "24 Hours" reports that London Stock exchange hosts the representatives of 70 countries, around 3000 companies. Out of these 3000, only about 1000 companies are represented in premium listing. „The Bank of Georgia" is included in the premium listing. Indeed, the success of this joint stock company is remarkable; however a broad statement about country's economic growth may be estimated as exaggeration.

In the text of 2007, a word "reform" is applied synonymously to positive concepts only, lexical items denoting success, fairness and promising future are used in the same context: "Reforming, charitable work", "Reformatory and leading parliament." „Our people are hundred times cleverer than those politicians who set themselves against reforms." „ Every reform , no matter which field it takes place in, sets itself the only goal: Improving our citizens lives. There is no such a thing as unpopular reforms".

Conclusion

I would like to summarise some basic findings of the presented research. analysis has shown that although President Saakashvili's report texts contain some argumentative judgements, still the most part of the corpus is of rhetorical character, enriched with stylistic devices. Practical arguments can be identified in the selected institutional speeches, however quite often claims for action as well as supportive premises have essential clarification shortages. The country's foreign policy and security related practical reasoning is developed with an absence of clear means leading to the set goals. For instance, the aim for Georgia to become a NATO member state is clear; nevertheless proposed means of reaching this goal profoundly lacks clarifications and seem unnecessary (or even quite wrong). Some of the significant strategies of the speaker persuading the audience are related to using the concepts of fairness, sense of responsibility, accountability. In addition, contrasting the nearest past to the current state – "Georgia before the Rose Revolution and now" gains an important role as a strategy and is widely applied in every annual report. Reforms and quick implementation of economic liberalisation are presented as core of political agenda. Overall, most of the strategies and generally the discourse created by the speaker is used, in my view, to legitimise the power of the ruling team, its political agenda and planned as well as already implemented policies.

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