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The Russian Media and Russia's Military Intervention in Georgia in 2008



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Abstract

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This study examines the role of the Russian media in affecting the public opinion in Russia regarding the Russian intervention in 2008. The largest armed conflict in Europe since Kosovo in 1999, the August 2008 war was fought between Georgia and Russia over the proclaimed independence of the Georgian separate governments of Abkhazia and South Ossetia which were supported by Russia. Russia intervened militarily and recognized the independence of the two separatist regions, supported by an overwhelming majority of the Russian population. In the study eight popular Russian media outlets were reviewed to examine what kind of messages they delivered to their readers during the time period between March till August in 2008. The method used for the study is discourse analysis, and the theoretical framework underlying the research is Barry Buzan's (et al., 1998) concept of securitization and Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky's (1988) concept of manufacturing consent which was later elaborated by Anthony DiMaggio (2009). The results show that the mainstream Russian media presented Georgia as a big threat to the Russian state, requiring to take urgent forceful measures. In this way, the Russian media, willingly or unwillingly, served as a tool for the Russian government to successfully securitize Georgia and justify the intervention of Russia in Georgia in August 2008. The securitization process was aided with manufacturing consent of the Russian public by means of relying mainly on one-sided (anti-Georgian) sources, choice of words and topics, framing of events, as well as seemingly critical rhetoric reproaching the government policies on superficial issues of procedure rather than issues of moral and international law. These trends identified in the mainstream media coverage must account for the positive opinion of the Russian public towards the intervention. The study also revealed the contrasting trends characterizing the mainstream and alternative Russian media coverage, thus once again confirming the crucial role of the media in establishing the different opinions among the public, by building contrasting images of the world.

Key words: Georgia, Russia, South Ossetia, intervention, war, mainstream, media, securitization, manufacturing consent, recognition, independence, separatist, public opinion, discourse analysis.

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Table 1: The contrasting messages delivered to the Russian people by the mainstream and alternative Russian media

Abbreviations

AIF-Argumenti I Fakti (Arguments and Facts)

BBC-British Broadcasting Corporation

CIS-the Commonwealth of Independent States

EU-the European Union

G-Gazeta (Russian. in English: Newspaper)

HRW-Human Rights Watch

IDP-Internally Displaced Person

JPF-Joint Peacekeeping Forces

KGB - in Russian: Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti, in English: Committee for State Security

KP-Komsomolskaya Pravda (Komsomol Truth)

LR-Lenta(ru) (Russian. In English: film)

MAP- Membership Action Plan

MFA-Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MIA-Ministry of Interior Affairs

MK-Moskovskiy Komsomolets (Moscow Komsomol)

MOD-Ministry of Defense

MP-Member of Parliament

MTV-Music Television

NATO- the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NG-Novaya Gazeta (Russian. In English: New Newspaper)

PACE-the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

RG-Rossiiskaya Gazeta (Russian Newspaper or Russia's newspaper)

RN-Ria Novosti (Russian International News Agency)

UN-the United Nations

USA ó the United States of America

WTO- World Trade Organization

Chapter one: Introduction

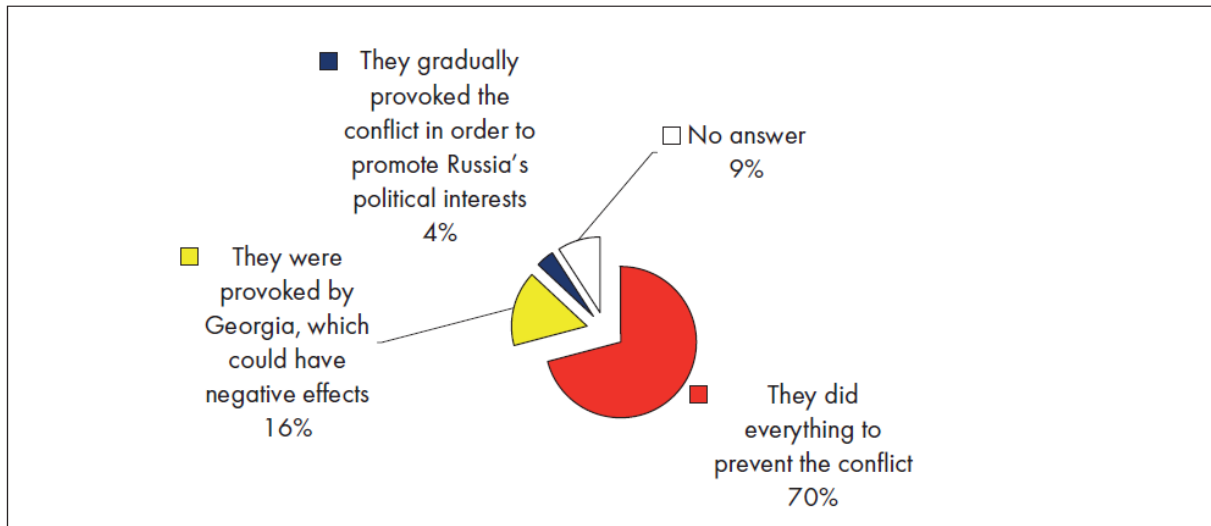
1.1. Research Topic and Research Problem

In August 2008, after months of escalating tensions between Russia and Georgia and military clashes between South Ossetian and Georgian government forces, Russia intervened militarily in Georgia with the declared purpose of protecting Russian peacekeepers deployed in South Ossetia and those residents who had become Russian citizens in recent years. On August 8, Russian ground forces from the 58th Army crossed into South Ossetia and Russian artillery and aircraft hit targets in South Ossetia as well as undisputed Georgian territory. South Ossetian and Abkhazian forces together with volunteers also participated in the fighting. "Instead of protecting civilians, Russian forces allowed South Ossetian forces who followed in their path to engage in wanton and wide-scale pillage and burning of Georgian homes and to kill, beat, rape, and threaten civilians." (Human Rights Watch, 2009) Two days after the withdrawal of Georgian troops from South Ossetia on August 10, Russian forces occupied undisputed Georgian territory in Southern and Western Georgia. On August 15 a ceasefire agreement was signed between Russia and Georgia brokered by the French European Union presidency. On August 26, Russia recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states (Ibid). The 2008 August war was the largest outbreak of fighting in Europe since the Kosovo war in 1999. Hundreds died in the shelling and fighting and close to two hundred thousand people were displaced from their homes (Toal, 2008:1).

The majority of the Russian population supported the Russian government's intervention in Georgia in 2008. Carmen Eller, a journalist of Spiegel says that in the opinion of some Russians, the Russian government did not go far enough in the conflict. Eller gives an example of a listener, calling in to Echo of Moscow, who said: "We should have trampled on Georgia and, while we were at it, taken over the Crimea again." (Eller, *Spiegel online International*, 2008) Russian Analytical Digest presented opinion polls conducted from August 10 to 18 in 2008, most of which were conducted by the Levada center. Levada Center is one of the largest Russian non-governmental polling and sociological research organizations. It is named after its founder, the first Russian professor of sociology Yuri Levada (Levada Center, 2011). According to these polls, 70% of Russians thought that Russian leaders did everything to prevent the conflict

between Georgia and South Ossetia, while only 4% thought they had provoked the conflict in order to promote Russia's political interests (See Graph 1).

Graph 1: How Would You Assess the Actions of the Russian Leaders in the Conflict Between Georgia and South Ossetia.



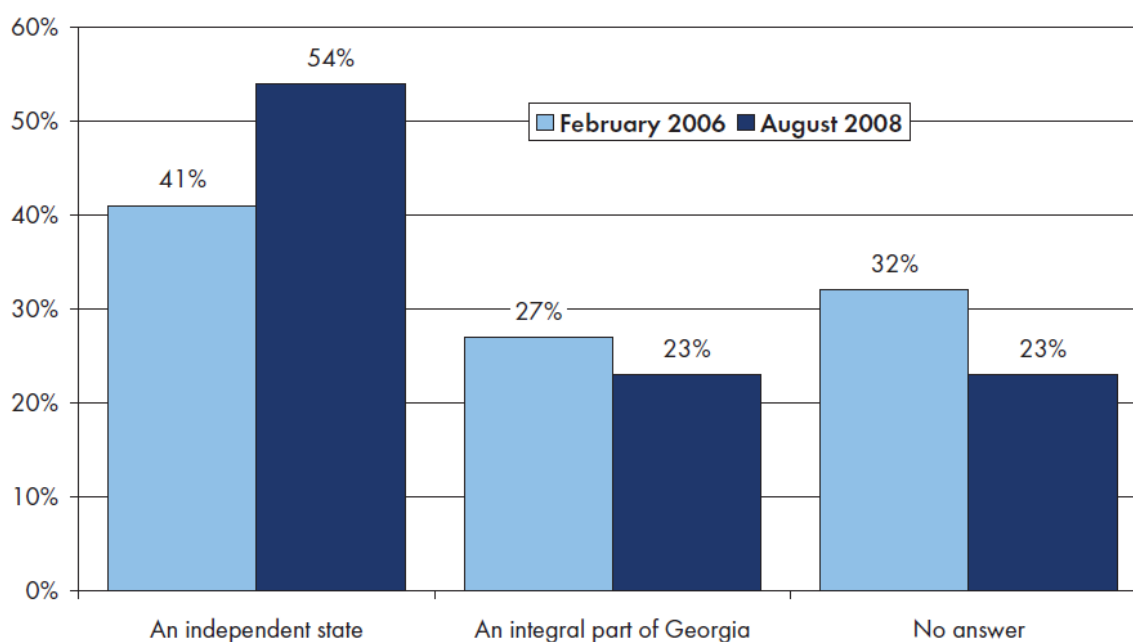
Source: Survey conducted by the Russian public opinion research institute Levada-center, August 15-18, 2008.

(Petrova, *Russian Analytical Digest*, 2008:19).

In the opinion of 66% of Russians, the leaders of Western countries supported Georgia in order to weaken Russia and push it out of Caucasus. 78% approved of the decision of the Russian leadership to send troops to South Ossetia to conduct a military operation.

54 % of Russians in August 2008 thought that South Ossetia was an independent state, as opposed to 41 % in 2006; 23% in 2008 thought South Ossetia was an integral part of Georgia, as opposed to 27 % in 2006. The rest gave no answer (see Graph 2).

Graph 2: In Your Opinion, Is South Ossetia Today an Integral Part of Georgia or an Independent State? (2006 vs. 2008)



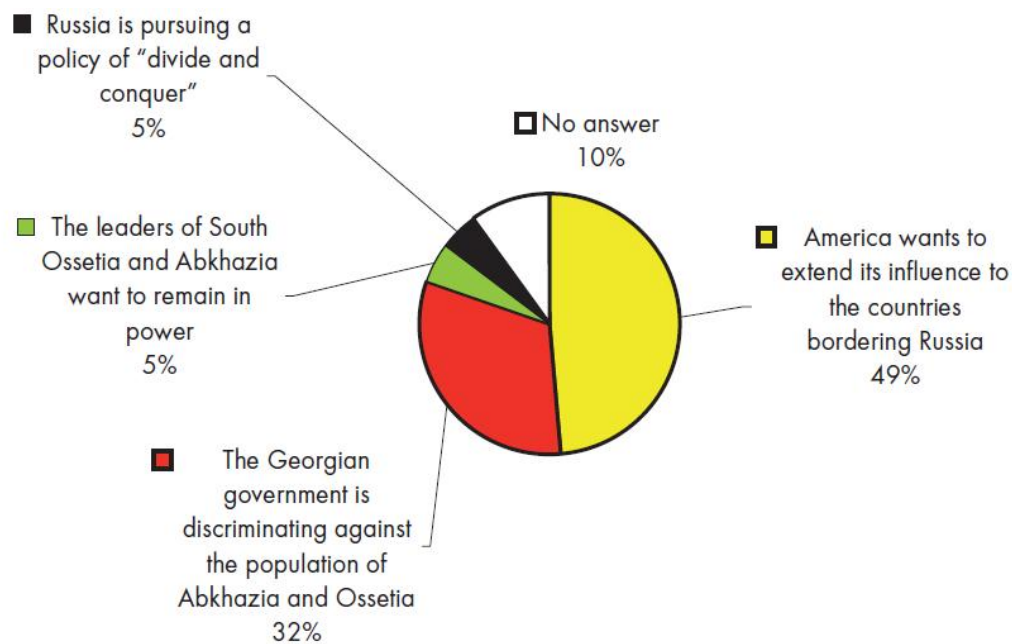
Source: Survey conducted by the public opinion Foundation, August 16-17, 2008.

(Petrova, *Russian Analytical Digest*, 2008:21).

The number of those who thought Abkhazia was an independent state rose from 24 % in 2006 to 44 % in August 2008. The number of those who thought Abkhazia was an integral part of another state fell from 36 % in 2006 to 27 % in 2008. The rest gave no answer. Also, in August 2008, 66% of Russians thought if South Ossetia applied to join the Russian Federation, Russia should accept them. This indicator was slightly lower for Abkhazia - 63%.

To the question what was the main trigger for the conflict in South Ossetia, the survey revealed that the majority, 49 % thought that America wanted to extend its influence to the countries bordering Russia, while 32% thought that the Georgian government was discriminating against the population of Abkhazia and South Ossetia; only 5 % thought that Russia pursued a policy of divide and conquer, and another 5 % thought that the leaders of South Ossetia and Abkhazia wanted to remain in power. 10% gave no answer (see Graph 3)

Graph 3: In Your Opinion, What Was The Main Trigger for the Conflict in South Ossetia?



Source: Survey Conducted by the Russian public opinion research institute Levada-center, August 15-18, 2008.

(Petrova, *Russian Analytical Digest*, 2008:17).

The number of the Russian people approving of Medvedev's and Putin's policies also significantly increased in August 2008 (Petrova, *Russian Analytical Digest*, 2008:17-21).

Based on the above-mentioned results, the question naturally appears whether the Russian media can be at least partly responsible for the attitudes prevailing among the Russian public. It is well known that media are an essential and almost inseparable part of our life. Some of the most important functions of the media include broadcasting news and delivering the existing views on different issues to the public. However, it is also known that the media do not always cover the events in an unbiased way, and they have a great power to divert our minds from the unsavoury events that need not be emphasized, and frame them in favour of certain people or policies. Handling information with special care is not a new phenomenon. In 1932, a journalist working in Moscow, Walter Duranty, won Pulitzer Prize. Duranty prepared reports for the New York Times, describing the Soviet life. Years passed before it became known that his main merit was skillfully downplaying the horrors of Stalin-era (Luciuk and Daniels, 2004). Although Russian influence in the former Soviet space has decreased, Moscow is still constantly trying to regain

control over its old spheres of influence. In this constant effort, media propaganda can still serve as an important tool.

Thus, freedom of media is very important in order to provide the public with the objective information about the policies of their government. Three Georgian and one Dutch reporters killed in Georgia during the war in 2008, as well as several injured (Oliver, Mousetrap Media Ltd, 2008), represent good examples of professional journalists, whose main aim and task is to deliver the objective, or at least an alternative perspective, to the public. The importance of media is even more obvious, if we realize how big the danger of provoking the public is when infusing them with the official and "governmental" versions of the events. This is a matter of responsibility of the media, which, willingly or unwillingly, can become a tool for the government to make the public accept certain policies, by means of creating negative images of certain people or things who pose obstacles for the implementation of those policies. Considering this, Duranty's case again comes to mind in the 21-st century. Even though the Cold War is long over, and terrorism has replaced communism as the evil force, bar none, to be reckoned with, it is well-known that the heir of the former Soviet Union has not changed its ways of dealing with information. The reports by Freedom House and Reporters Without Borders on the freedom of Russian media (see chapter 5), contribute to raising the question about how far the Russian media can go in working as a tool for the Russian government to conjure consent behind its policies among the Russian public.

In connection to the above-said, it is important to know whether Russian media could be held at least partly responsible for influencing the Russian public opinion regarding Russia's intervention in Georgia in 2008.

1.2. Research Aim and Significance

A significant amount of research has been carried out on the war between Georgia and Russia in August 2008. Also, some research is available on the relationship between Georgia and Russia following the 2004 Rose Revolution and afterwards (Totten, 2008). It has also been written about the cyber war, and the information (propaganda) war in 2008, and Georgian, Russian and Western journalists all have been criticized for the biased coverage of the 2008 war (Bennett,

2009). It has been written about Russia's preparation for the war (Illarionov, *Novaya Gazeta*, 2009). The statements made by Russian officials, that preceded and justified the Russian intervention in Georgia in 2008, and the recognition of the independence of Georgian separatist regions by Russia, have been studied (Toal, 2009).

Daniel Bennett (2009), making reference to the Georgian journalist Margarita Akhvlediani, points out that censorship, political pressures, and patriotism all contributed to the failure of some journalists to represent different points of view on the conflict. Journalists had their equipment and material confiscated, they were arrested, deported, wounded and killed. Cyber attacks were carried out on Georgian as well as South Ossetian websites. Internet blogs and forums, which became a crucial way of receiving information, also became the victims of the secret services and PR campaigns (Bennett, 2009). News website *Newsru* criticized the Russian media coverage of the war, giving the example of *Izvestia*'s triumphant headline - "Russia Is Back", over a report about the war, which said that "by helping weak nations Russia has once again become the force to be taken seriously in international politics." (*Newsru*, 2008) However, according to *Newsru*, after the first weeks the critical voices started to be heard (Ibid).

According to the study carried out by Makarychev, Russia's policies can be understood from the perspective of the "security region" concept. The author contends that Russia securitizes all attempts to treat it as an anomalous country, by trying to draw the attention of Western leaders to the allegedly undemocratic nature of the Ukrainian and Georgian political regimes. Russia perceives NATO enlargement as one of the major threats to its security (Makarychev, 2008).

The brief review of the related research to the topic of the study allows us to conclude that the research concerning the media coverage of the 2008 war mainly includes articles from news websites and newspapers. This cannot be considered as the profound research about the role of Russian media in affecting the Russian public opinion on Russia's intervention in Georgia. Also, different trends characterizing the Russian media coverage are not presented neither measured against the results revealed by the Levada Centre polls. The research done on the securitization of Georgia by Russia, carried out by Makarychev (2008) focuses on understanding the policies of Russia towards its neighboring countries from the "security region" perspective.

Makarychev's study does not consider the role of the Russian media in the process of securitization of Georgia or establishing the Russian public opinion about the intervention. Herman and Chomsky (1988), and DiMaggio (2009) studied the role of media in affecting the opinion of the public who favor military intervention over peaceful resolution of a conflict. This study can partly be regarded as a test of their theoretical assumptions in another reality (see chapter 2). Thus, the research problem of this study, that is, the role of media coverage in establishing the Russian public opinion on the intervention, particularly the opinion revealed by the Levada Center Polls, is obvious. More so, if we consider that the underlying theoretical frames of securitization and manufacturing consent have not been applied to different trends of the Russian media coverage on Georgia. Another specificity of this study is that it analyses the media coverage of Georgia not only during the war but also during several months prior to it, which can be considered as the preparation period for the Russian intervention in Georgia.

1.3. Research Questions

Bearing the above-mentioned in mind, the research questions derived from the research problem, that is, the role of the Russian media in establishing the positive attitude of the public in Russia towards the Russian intervention in Georgia in 2008, and consequently, the recognition of the independence of the separatist regions of Georgia, are the following:

- How did the Russian media portray Georgia before and during the intervention (from March till August 2008)?
- To what extent can the positive attitude of the Russian public towards Russia's intervention in Georgia be attributed to the Russian mainstream media coverage?
- Can the expressions of securitization and "manufacturing consent" be identified in the mainstream Russian media coverage of the issues related to Georgia? (see Chapter 2 for the explanation of securitization and manufacturing consent).

1.4. The Theoretical framework and the method of the Study

The theoretical framework underlying the research is Barry Buzan's (et al., 1998) concept of securitization and Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky's (1988) concept of manufacturing consent which was later elaborated by Anthony DiMaggio (2009). Securitization, according to Buzan, means presenting an issue as a country, a person, a group of people, a section of society, etc. - as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions beyond the normal rules (Buzan et al., 1998:24). Thirteen years have passed since Buzan introduced the theory of securitization, and excessive securitization still remains a very important and dangerous part of almost every sphere of our life in the 21st century. In a similar fashion, manufacturing consent concerns the role of media in establishing public opinion about the policies of the government. Manufacturing consent of the public by the media is usually carried out by choice of topics, filtering of information, giving priority to the coverage of the victims of the allies, reliance on one-sided sources, suppressing critical dissent, mainly by creating the impression of lively debate by pre-assuming the official line of thinking from which the debate develops (DiMaggio, 2009). The theoretical framework of the study will be reviewed in detail in chapter 2, and its applicability to the Russian media will be examined throughout the paper during the analysis of the findings. For our study it is particularly interesting, whether the securitization theory and manufacturing consent are applicable to some of the Russian media in terms of their coverage of the Russian government policies in relation to Georgia. The trends that will be identified in the mainstream Russian media coverage, will be analyzed according to the analytical frames of securitization and manufacturing consent, in order to understand to what extent the Russian public opinion regarding the intervention can be explained by the Russian media coverage. Mainly, the theoretical framework of manufacturing consent may possibly be applicable to the media coverage of Georgia-related issues during the months before the intervention, which at the same time may be regarded as the preparation period for the securitization at the time closer to the intervention. Thus, it is interesting to see whether manufacturing consent by the media served to prepare the public to accept the securitizing moves made by the Russian government before the intervention in Georgia.

How can the study be carried out? Discourse analysis, the method of research which, according to James Paul Gee (2001) studies the nature of "language-in-use" is the most relevant method to study securitization, as Buzan (et al., 1998:177) also points out. If a security discourse is present in the given community, it should be expected to materialize in the texts under analysis (Ibid). The news items and articles from March till August will be analyzed, to see how the recognition of Kosovo's independence by some countries in February and Bucharest Summit of NATO in April affected the Russian media coverage of Georgia-related issues until the intervention. It was decided to review some of the most popular media outlets in Russia, as revealed by a survey conducted by a Russian website (Superjob portal, 2007), that coincided with the list of prominent Russian newspapers presented by a BBC article about the Russian press, based on the figures on average issue readership provided by the media and advertising research firm TNS Gallup Media (BBC, 2008). For more on the method and the sources used, see chapters 3 and 5.

1.5. Disposition

The thesis consists of eight chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the topic of the study, and presents the research problem, research questions, theoretical framework and method, and the limitations. Chapter 2 reviews the theoretical frames underlying the thesis, and chapter 3 contains the review of the method applied, and the brief information about the sources used. In chapter 4 the background to the August 2008 war between Georgia and Russia is given, in particular, the historical implications as well as more recent development of the events prior to the 2008 war are described. Chapter 5 presents the information about the modern Russian media and more detailed description of the sources, i.e. some of the most popular Russian news agencies and newspapers reviewed in the thesis. Chapter 6 presents the findings collected from the above-mentioned news agencies and newspapers. In chapter 7 the findings are analyzed, and chapter 8 gives the answers to the research questions posed previously and the conclusions drawn from the analysis of the findings, as well as the final recommendations.

1.6. Limitations

Due to the researcher's nationality (Georgian), there is more probability for the researcher to be or to be suspected as biased. This danger has to be nullified by a maximally objective research. The matter of limitations is also connected with the sources of the study. One may assume that since only online sources were reviewed, they do not reflect the impact of media on non-users of internet. However, it must be noted that the online newspapers reviewed are also available in printed version, hence broader segment of population has access to them. Another limitation is posed by the fact that the particular impact of the Russian media on the Russian public opinion regarding Georgia-related issues after 2008 Russo-Georgian war cannot be confirmed by conducting interviews with Russian citizens and representatives of the Russian media. In order to answer the research questions formulated above, we have to look at Russian online news agencies and newspapers, and answer the research questions after reviewing and analyzing their coverage of the issues related to Georgia in 2008. The comparison between different trends identified in the coverage of different media will allow the researcher to avoid bias and guarantee conducting the study as objectively as possible.

The limitation of the sources can also concern the fact that the research reviews only the Russian press and news agencies, but this choice is partly based on the method of discourse analysis, as it is easier to review written material than broadcasted. However, it is also worthwhile to note that since most TV channels in Russia are more biased and subject to state and self-censorship than any other type of media (Carbonnel, *Reuters*, 2011), it would be appropriate to assume that the trends of coverage revealed in some of the mainstream press and online news agencies, would be even more explicit in the Russian mainstream TV channels.

Chapter 2: Theoretical frames

In this chapter the theoretical framework underlying the thesis, that is, securitization (Buzan et al., 1998), and manufacturing consent (Herman, Chomsky, 1988, in DiMaggio, 2009), as well as their applicability to the study will be reviewed.

2.1. Securitization.

2.1.1. The explanation of the concept of securitization

The concept of securitization was introduced by Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde in 1998 in *Security: A New Framework For Analysis*, where they argue against the view that the basis of security studies is war and force, introducing a more radical view of security studies, which consists of exploring threats to referent objects, and the securitization of those (military as well as nonmilitary) threats. The dissatisfaction with the narrow understanding of security increased with the rise of economic and environmental agendas in international relations in the 1970s and 1980s, due to greater concerns with identity issues and the transnational crime in the 1990s, hence the need for looking at more non-military causes of conflict emerged (Buzan et al., 1998). Securitization, according to Buzan, means presenting the issue as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal rules of political procedure (Buzan et al., 1998:24).

By designating a certain issue as an existential threat, a securitizing actor justifies the use of extraordinary measures in order to handle the security issue. An issue is presented as posing an existential threat to a designated referent object (traditionally, but not necessarily, the state). The nature of existential threat varies according to different sectors and levels of analysis. There is no universal way of defining the existential threat (Buzan et al., 1998:21,22). „Securitization studies aims to understand 1) who securitizes, 2) on what issues (threats), 3) for whom (referent objects), 4) why, 5) with what results, and, 6) under what conditions (i.e. what explains when the securitization is successful).“ (Buzan et al, 1998:32) Thus, the units involved in security analysis are as follow:

1. Referent objects: things that are presented to be existentially threatened.

2. Securitizing actors: actors who securitize issues by proclaiming a referent object existentially threatened.

3. Functional actors: This actor significantly influences decisions in the field of security, but is neither a referent object nor the securitizing actor (Buzan et al.,1998:35,36).

The referent object in the military sector is usually the state, but can also be other kinds of political entities. Sometimes the threats to the survival of the armed forces can give those forces the status of referent object. In the political sector, existential threats traditionally concern sovereignty, but sometimes also ideology of the state. International regimes, and international society generally, can be existentially threatened by situations that are detrimental to those regimes. In the societal sector, the referent object consists of collective identities such as nations and religions that exist independent of the state. Given the conservative nature of 'identity', it is always possible to portray challenges and changes as threats to identity, because 'we will no longer be us.' (Buzan et al.,1998:22-23) It is difficult to distinguish between referent objects and securitizing actors. The referent object for security has traditionally been the state, and more ambiguously, the nation. 'The referent object is that to which one can point and say 'it has to survive, therefore it is necessary to' ' (Buzan et al., 1996:36) In the role of securitizing actors are generally political leaders, governments, pressure groups, etc. whose argument generally is that it is necessary to defend the security of the state, nation, civilization, or some other large community, principle, or system. When we say that societal security is about nations and their survival, this as a rule means that some group, movement, etc. claims to speak or act on behalf of the nation. The distinction between securitizing actor and referent object is easy in the context of the state, because the government (usually) speaks on behalf of the state. There are no such formal rules for nations or environment, which causes a larger problem of legitimacy (Buzan et al., 1998:40-41). Functional actors are generally agencies of force, mercenary companies, providers of the instruments of force and any subunits that can influence the military and foreign policy and who may have their own survival interests (usually those of staying in power) that can be distinguished from national interests (Buzan et al.,1998:56).

Thus, securitization can be considered as a more extreme version of politicization. In theory, any public issue can be regarded as non-politicized (meaning the state does not deal with it and it is

not made an issue of public debate) through politicized (meaning the issue is part of public policy, requiring government decision) to securitized (meaning the issue is presented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions beyond the rules of normal politics). This link between politicization and securitization does not imply that securitization always goes through the state, but it is possible for other social entities to give an issue the status of urgency (Buzan et al., 1998:24). In our study, media can be viewed as such an actor in some cases.

By designating an international security issue as an existential threat – the actor has claimed a right to handle the issue through extraordinary means, to break the normal political rules of the game. (Buzan et al., 1998:24) Thus, the issue becomes a security issue not necessarily because a real existential threat exists but because the issue is presented and believed as such a threat. Of course, where violation of rights is the rule and security arguments are not needed to legitimize such acts, when a securitizing actor takes an issue out of what under those conditions is “normal politics”, we have a case of securitization (Ibid). It must be noted that presenting something as an existential threat to a referent object is only a *securitizing move*, but in order to be securitized, the audience has to accept it as such. A successful securitization consists of three steps: existential threats, emergency action, and effects on inter-unit relations by breaking the rules. In order for the analyst to understand securitization, the task is not to assess some objective threats that endanger an object; rather, we have to grasp the processes of constructing a shared understanding of the perceived threat. Although in one sense securitization means intense politicization, in another sense it is the opposite of politicization. Politicization means to make an issue seem to be open, a matter of choice, something that is decided upon and that requires responsibility. By contrast, securitization, mostly on the international level, means to present an issue so urgent and existential, that instead of exposing it to normal politics, it should be dealt with urgently by top leaders (Buzan et al., 1998:26-29).

The process of securitization in language theory is called a speech act, which consists of – existential threat, point of no return, and a possible way out –. The designation of an existential threat requiring urgent measures is essential, as well as the acceptance of that designation by the audience. If certain objects can be referred to that are generally regarded as threatening – such as tanks, hostile sentiments, or polluted waters, although not enough for securitization, they are

facilitating conditions for presenting a security threat. What constitutes a security issue is designated by political actors, not analysts, but analysts say if the actions of political actors fulfill the security criteria. The attempted securitizers are "judged" first by other social actors and citizens, and the consequences of these actions are studied by analysts (Buzan et al., 1998:26-34).

Thus, security is a word used for justifying the use of force and other extreme measures. Excessive securitization creates an intrusive and coercive state and increases the intensity of the security dilemma with neighbors that do not share the ideological project. "Avoiding excessive and irrational securitization is thus a legitimate social, political, and economic objective of considerable importance." (Buzan et al., 1998:208) In 1998, Buzan expressed the hope that with the demise of the Communist counter project and the closed states and societies associated with it, the prospect existed for desecuritization of most kinds of political, social and economic spheres. However, it was also realized that the danger of excessive securitization remained (Buzan et al., 1998, 209-212).

2.1.2. The Applicability of the concept of securitization to the study

It is important to see how the theory of securitization can be applied to the topic of our research. The units of security analysis are important in this regard. In the role of the securitizing actor the Russian government can be implied, but as mentioned above, other entities, in our case the media can also be in the role of securitizing actor, whereas in the role of the designated existential threat is the Georgian government. Securitization of Georgia by the Russian government is not a new phenomenon. While the study considers the period during several months before the intervention, it is important to reflect on the expressions of securitization in the actions of the Russian government in relation to Georgia even before 2008. This part may also appear as the result of the study, as we are applying the analytical framework to the empirical data. However, as this data does not fit in the period chosen for the study, it can be considered as a sort of preliminary test of the applicability of the analytical framework to the study, which will be further tested more thoroughly in the findings and analysis parts.

When considering the relations of the post Rose Revolution Georgia and Russia, it is important to bear in mind the massive deportations of Georgians from the Russian Federation in 2006, (the Russian government carried out the mass deportations of Georgian people on ethnic grounds in 2006, after Georgia deported Russian military servicemen who were accused of spying for Russia), as well as economic blockade of Georgia on the pretext of low quality of Georgian products (securitization in the economic sector) in 2006 (Jibladze, 2006). Another aspect to take into consideration is that while the Russian government carried out the mass deportations of Georgian people in 2006, the government of Russia addressed the Georgian intellectual elite: famous musicians, singers, directors, doctors, residents of the capital Tbilisi, with the words: "You are our brothers, if you do not feel good in your city, come to us, our home is your home." Of course this was pure rhetoric, but to this nice gesture Saakashvili did not have anything to respond with. (Svanidze, *Ejednevniy Jurnal*, 2006) As the journalist Svanidze puts it, this "ridiculous" division between the Georgian elite of Tbilisi and emigrants, is aimed at "fusing the disguised nationalism of the apparatus with the massive xenophobia of the masses." (Ibid) As mentioned above, it is very hard to differentiate between the state and the government, since the government is supposed to represent the state, and consequently, the people (Buzan et al., 1998:42). Thus, the differentiation deliberately made by the Kremlin between the Georgian government, Georgian intellectual elite of Tbilisi and ordinary emigrants, could be only the tactic to disguise the securitization policy directed towards the Georgians, be it the government or the people (as it has been proved by the actions, the securitization agenda was directed towards the entire Georgian state) and aggressively pursued by the Kremlin. Thus, for our study it is important to see to what extent the Russian state-censored or self-censored media helped the Russian government in this securitization process in 2008 (see chapter 5 for more information about Russian media).

The referent objects are the Russian citizens (holders of Russian passports), residing on the territory of South Ossetia, as well as the Russian "peacekeepers" deployed on the separatist regions of Georgian territory, since according to Buzan (1998:22) armed forces can be presented as referent objects. The existential threat posed to the Russian citizens residing in Georgia and Russian armed forces, as presented by the Kremlin, is the government of Georgia. The Russian media is an important and necessary tool for the Russian government, as, willingly or

unwillingly, the media has to guarantee that the Russian public accepts the securitization or, more precisely, the securitizing moves directed towards Georgia, made by the Russian government. As already pointed out, there is no clear boundary drawn between the Georgian government and Georgian people as existential threats, especially in the case under study, when a survival of the holders of a certain identity (or identities) is presented as threatened by another. As for functional actors, in our research, and generally according to Buzan, they are not clearly separated from the securitizing actor, but can include all those oligarchs or important members of elite who, in one way or the other, influence the Kremlin policies. The separatist leaders of South Ossetia and Abkhazia for whom staying in power is important, can also be viewed as functional actors. Some media can be seen as securitizing actors, when rather than being forced to be used as tools for securitization, they willingly become ones as they think it is the right thing to do.

Thus, again, the government has to significantly rely on the media, if its aim to make the public accept the securitizing move, and in this fashion, legitimize the securitization. In order to achieve this, the securitizing speech acts made by Russian officials have to be widely covered and provided to the audience, without critical evaluation, questioning or presenting alternative speech acts that denounce the securitizing speech acts. This theory is possibly applicable to the Russian media coverage of the events particularly preceding the Russian intervention in Georgia in August 2008. To see whether securitization had taken place, it is interesting whether the trend of presenting Georgia as an existential threat for Russia and the necessity of handling this threat by taking urgent measures outside the normal rules of politics can be identified in the Russian media coverage in 2008 before the Russian intervention in Georgia.

2.2. Manufacturing Consent

2.2.1. The explanation of the concept of manufacturing consent

In his book *When Media goes to War*, Anthony DiMaggio (2009) considers the role of media propaganda in forming public opinion about the policies of the government. Although DiMaggio studies the American media and the policies of the government of the USA, the theoretical assumptions that he tests and elaborates, can also be applicable to the Russian reality. DiMaggio bases his research on Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky's landmark work, *Manufacturing*

Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media. Herman and Chomsky formulate an analytical framework that attempts to explain the performance of the media which propagandize on behalf of the powerful interests (DiMaggio,2009:13). The media serve the purpose of defending the economic, social, and political agenda of the privileged "through selection of topics, distribution of concerns, framing of issues, filtering of information, emphasis and tone, and by keeping the bounds of debate within acceptable premises." (DiMaggio,2009:13) Herman and Chomsky describe five filters through which propaganda messages are created by the media. These filters include: 1. "concentrated (business) media ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass media firms", 2. "advertising as the primary income source of the mass media"; 3. "the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power"; 4. The use of official and elite-based "flak" as means of disciplining the media"; 5. And anti-communism as a national religion and control mechanism." Anti-terrorism religion can be regarded as another means of silencing criticism by the media (DiMaggio,2009:13,14).

Due to uncritical dissemination of speeches about U.S. foreign policy from government officials, American media outlets marginalized the possibility of a peaceful resolution of the conflict with Afghanistan. The 90 percent of Americans supported using force against the committers of the attacks, and 70 percent supported the war with Afghanistan (DiMaggio,2009:14). "The data show that political leaders and sympathetic media outlets can be very successful in their efforts to "manufacture consent" for specific foreign policy initiatives." (DiMaggio,2009:15)

The concept of hegemony is also very interesting in understanding media propaganda. Hegemony, originally developed by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci in the early twentieth century, distinguishes between the use of "coercion and consent" in modern democracies. Gramsci contends that societal elites' leadership over subordinate groups and individuals is based on ideological controls, rather than coercion. "Consent is "historically" achieved through the prestige, and consequent confidence, which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of (economic) production." (Ibid) According to Gramsci, hegemony presupposes "an active and practical involvement of hegemonized groups." (DiMaggio,2009:15) Journalists represent one of such groups (Ibid).

As DiMaggio argues, even though media coverage may represent mainstream critics of the war, the claims that challenge the "right" of the United States to invade sovereign nations are ignored in the mass media. In this way DiMaggio confirms Chomsky's argument that propaganda means the limiting of debate to those "acceptable" views that are expressed by the major political parties (DiMaggio, 2009:17). In a "democratic propaganda system", the mass media "does not proclaim the party line, - so that it can easily be refuted, but presupposes it, thus helping to establish it even more deeply as the very precondition of discussion, while also providing the appearance of a lively debate." (Ibid) DiMaggio carried out an analysis "to measure the extent to which moral and foundational criticisms (those framing the Iraq war as illegal under international law, driven by oil interests, or as exacting too great a toll on Iraqi civilians) and procedural criticisms (framing the war as too costly or unwinnable) appear in coverage of Iraq withdrawal." (DiMaggio, 2009:22)

Referring to the historic discussion undertaken by academic and political elites regarding the need to "manufacture consent" for public policy, DiMaggio (2009:24) reviews the role of journalist Edward Bernays in the use of propaganda in convincing the public of the need to enter into the First World War. When discussing the role of elite manipulation of media and public opinion in a democratic society in his *Propaganda*, Bernays admitted, that the media has a special mission to "mold the minds of the masses" (DiMaggio, 2009:264, 265).

Respected journalist and intellectual Walter Lippmann also expressed similar attitudes towards citizen-based, grassroots democracy: "The common interests (of the country) very largely elude public opinion entirely, with 'a fairly large percentage' of the people 'bound to agree (on policy issues) without having taken the time, or without possessing the background for appreciating the choices which the leader presents to them.'" As a result, the public depends on elites to "manufacture" the consent of the people, which he calls "bewildered herd" (DiMaggio, 2009:265).

One of the main expressions of "manufacturing consent" is "worthy and unworthy victims". According to Herman and Chomsky, the victims in enemy states receive substantial attention in the news, due to the journalists' "high moral and self-righteous tone" directed towards the oppressors. Herman and Chomsky explain that the acts of violence in enemy states are presented in such a way as to produce maximum emotional impact on readers (DiMaggio, 2009:85).

Media coverage of civilian casualties falls into two categories: worthy victims in the case of enemy states, and unworthy victims destroyed by the allies (DiMaggio,2009:23). As describing how the concept of genocide is politicized by the media and political leaders for the sake of official agendas, DiMaggio says that, in order to decide whether the coverage of certain events by the media fulfils its aim, firstly it is essential to define whether the role of the media is to ensure equal treatment of all victims of terror and violence, or to express and justify elite values that favor specific types of victims over others (DiMaggio,2009:111).

2.2.2. The applicability of manufacturing consent to the study

Based on the concept of manufacturing consent, an important aim for our study is to see whether the reliance on particular sources is noticeable in the Russian media coverage of the issues related to Georgia, as well as selection of topics, choice of words and phrases when describing the Georgian side or the Russian side (or those affiliated with Russian side i.e. Abkhazian and South Ossetian), and framing of the events designed to create a particular image of Georgia or the Georgian government as opposed to Russian. It is also interesting to know if the Russian media challenged the right of Russia to intervene in Georgia, and generally to interfere in the internal affairs of a sovereign country, as most notably expressed by supporting the separatist regions that are internationally recognized as parts of Georgia. It is also important to know if they refer to Russia as aggressive, or disseminate the critical views regarding the deployment of the Russian forces on the Georgian territory. These are the important questions to answer in our research, if we base the work on the above-mentioned assumptions about the role of the media. Based on the concept of worthy and unworthy victims, we can ask how the victims in South Ossetia in the war of 2008 are presented and whether the civilian victims on the Ossetian and Georgian sides are covered equally by the Russian media. For this research DiMaggio's findings are very important, as the data show that political leaders and sympathetic media outlets can be very successful in their efforts to manufacture consent for specific foreign policy initiatives. (DiMaggio,2009:15) In the given case, The Russian intervention in Georgia can be regarded as the certain foreign policy initiative for which the Russian media may have attempted to manufacture consent of the majority of the Russian population.

Considering the filters introduced by Herman and Chomsky, we can ask whether the fifth filter is especially applicable to the Russian media, with the difference of course, that instead of anti-

communism and anti-terrorism ÷religionö prevalent in the American society and thus, in the media, for the Russian reality anti-Western, especially anti-American rhetoric may be visible and can be regarded as one of the main reasons of actively disseminating the official views. Based on the concept of hegemony introduced by Gramsci and reviewed by DiMaggio, we can contend that the popularity of Putin and his government is attributed to the significant economic growth achieved by him in the post-Soviet Russia, which causes his ÷prestigeö, confidence and influence over the people and especially over the media outlets, since “for many Russians, the economic crisis of the 1990s remains a painful memory. The economic upswing that happened under Vladimir Putin's terms as the Kremlin chief not only improved the country's material situation, but also helped promote a new sense of self-confidence. That has also been evident in the days following the war in the Caucasus. In direct contrast to the Western view, Russians have emphasized the fact that the Georgians started the offensive and the war.ö (Eller, *Spiegel Online*, 2008) Some of the Russian media can be viewed as one of the ÷hegemonizedö groups in the hegemony of the Kremlin (see chapter 5 for more information on the Russian media).

Thus, in order to see whether ÷manufacturing consentö of the Russian public was carried out by the Russian media in 2008 before and during Russia's intervention in Georgia, the tendency of the media's reliance of particular sources, choice of words and topics, framing of events, and emphasis have to be given consideration. It is especially important to see whether Russian journalists criticized their government and if they did, whether the criticism referred to the issues of substance, or superficial procedural issues, to use the terms presented by DiMaggio (2009).

As pointed out in 1.4., for this study it is interesting whether the theoretical framework of manufacturing consent can be applied to the Russian media coverage of Georgia-related issues during the months before the intervention, which at the same time may be regarded as the preparation period for the securitization that supposedly took place at the time closer to the intervention. It is interesting whether the expressions of manufacturing consent are visible in the Russian media coverage before the intervention, and whether manufacturing consent serves to prepare the public for the securitization of Georgia. The research questions posed in the study are closely interlinked, that is, answering the first question is essential to answer the second and third questions, and the answers to the second and third research questions also in a way depend on each other. In particular, if the trends identified in the Russian mainstream media coverage (first

research question) may explain the opinions of the Russian public about certain Georgia-related issues (second question), that means that the expressions of securitization and manufacturing consent were most probably carried out by the Russian media. If the trends identified in the Russian media (first research question) fit in the expressions of manufacturing consent or securitization, we have the answer to the third question which at the same time reinforces the answer to the second research question.

Chapter three: Method

The chapter reviews the method applied, and the brief information about the sources used in the study.

3.1. Discourse Analysis

The method to investigate a case of securitization is discourse analysis, since we are interested when and how something is established by whom as a security threat. By this method we will not find underlying motives or hidden agendas, since this is not the purpose of discourse analysis (Buzan et al.,1998:176,177). The study will be carried out on prominent Russian online news agencies and online versions of Russian newspapers, by choosing the articles which covered the events in Georgia in 2008 before and during the Russian intervention, preferably the articles from March. This time period was chosen based on the Bucharest Summit held in April when Georgia was promised eventual NATO membership but was refused MAP, and the recognition of Kosovo's independence by a number of states in February 2008. Thus, it is interesting to see how Bucharest Summit as well as the recognition of Kosovo's independence affected Russian media coverage of the issues related to Georgia. The research will be based on the tools of enquiry as explained by James Paul Gee (*An Introduction to Discourse Analysis, Theory and Method*, 2001), which will be briefly reviewed. According to Gee, language is always used from a perspective and always occurs within a context. Discourse analysis is a method of research which studies the nature of "language-in-use". The method is based on the "tools of enquiry" and strategies for applying them. These tools are "thinking devices", that guide inquiry in regard to specific data, issues and questions. James Paul Gee calls the language in use "discourse" with "a little d". But since "language in use" is generally accompanied by non-language "stuff", such as clothes, gestures, actions, values, attitudes, beliefs, etc. then "Big D Discourses" are involved. We are members of many different Discourses, which often influence each other in positive and negative ways. Thus, the tools of inquiry study discourse in Discourses. Rather than simply describing the data, we are interested in gaining evidence for our theory of the domain, to explain how and why "language-in-use" works the way it does (Gee,2001:8).

Discourse analysis helps to advance understanding of how language works in society to create better and worse worlds, institutions, and human relationships (Gee,2001:5-8). "Collocational patterns" are various sorts of grammatical devices that "colocate" with each other, which, in

turn, co-relate with other non-language stuff. This is compared to choosing clothes that go together or a style according to a certain activity or activities. The author calls this grammar one used to create grammar two, that is, to create collocational patterns by means of which we recognize a specific social language and the social identities and activities related to it (Gee,2001,29-30). The author introduces the tools of inquiry - "situated meanings" and "cultural models", which are thinking devices that help us to understand the language we want to analyze (Gee,2001:40-44). Every Meaning is situated in the human mind as it is grounded in actual practices and experiences, from which they were extracted, and influence our involvement in the subsequent experiences (Gee,2001:53). Situated meanings, apart from residing in individual minds, are also negotiated between people through social interaction (Gee,2001:81).

Words are also associated with cultural models, that are storylines, images, or (informal) theories shared by people belonging to specific social or cultural groups (Gee,2001:81). Cultural models explain, in relation to the standards of the group, why words have the various situated meanings. Cultural models are usually not completely stored in one person's head but are distributed across the different sorts of expertise and viewpoints found in the group like pieces of a puzzle which can potentially be shared to develop the big picture (Ibid). A very important property of language is reflexivity (Ibid). Language simultaneously reflects reality (the way things are), and constructs (construes) it to be a certain way. Language and context endlessly reflect their own images between each other. Any piece of language is made of a set of grammatical cues or clue (Gee,2001:83-85). These cues or clues are part of grammar one and grammar two (Gee,2001:29). Language contains the cues and clues that guide us in the six building tasks that are carried out simultaneously. These building tasks are:

1. *Semiotic building*, that is, using cues and clues to assemble situated meanings about what semiotic systems, systems of knowledge, and ways of knowing, are here and now relevant and activated.
2. *Word building*, that is, using cues and clues to assemble situated meanings about what is here and now, present and absent, concrete and abstract, probable, possible, impossible.
3. *Activity building*, that is, using cues and clues to assemble situated meanings about what activity or activities are taking place.

4. *Socio-culturally situated identity and relationship building*, that is, using cues and clues to assemble situated meanings about what identities and relationships are relevant to the interaction, with their corresponding attitudes, values, ways of feeling, knowing and believing, and ways of acting and interacting.

5. *Political building*, that is, using cues and clues to construct the nature and relevance of various social goods, such as status and power, etc.

6. *Connection building*, that is, using cues and clues to make assumptions about how the past and future of an interaction are connected to the present moment and to each other (Gee,2001:85-86).

The social languages, situated meanings and cultural models let people enact and recognize different Discourses at work (i.e. to see each other and various things in the world as certain kinds of people and certain kinds of things involved in certain kinds of activities) (Ibid).

A discourse analysis is based on the details of speech or writing that are relevant in the situation and to the arguments the analyst is attempting to make. A discourse analysis is not based on *all* the physical features present (Gee,2001:88). Actual analyses usually develop only a small part of the full picture. However, every discourse analysis needs to consider, if only as background, the whole picture. Essentially, a discourse analysis asks questions about how language, at a given time and place, is used to explain the aspects of the situation network as realized at that time and place and how the aspects of the situation network simultaneously account for that language (remember reflexivity). A discourse analysis involves, then, asking questions about the building tasks that were listed above (Gee,2001:92).

3.2. Validity of the method of Discourse Analysis

Validity of the method does not imply arguing that a discourse analysis reflects reality in any simple way (Gee,2001:94), firstly because humans construct their realities, though what is beyond human control also affects this construction. Secondly, just as language is always reflexively related to situations, so too, a discourse analysis is reflexively related to the language-plus-situation it is about. The analyst interprets his or her data in a certain way, and that data so interpreted, in turn, affects the analysis in certain ways and not others. However, it does not mean that discourse analyses are subjective. Validity is something that different analyses can have more or less of. Furthermore, validity is not irrevocable. All analyses are

subject to further discussion (Ibid). A *valid* analysis explains things that any future investigation of the same or related data, will have to consider. Discourse analysis argues that certain data support a given theme or point (hypothesis). It is also important for the researcher to acknowledge if any answers support the opposing conclusions (Gee,2001:95,96).

3.3. The applicability of Discourse Analysis to the study

For our study it is important to answer what kinds of situated meanings and cultural models the Russian media attempted to enact regarding the issues related to Georgia, what kinds of worlds they attempted to build in the minds of the Russian people, in order to cause them to view Georgians as *certain kinds of people* engaged in *certain kinds of activities*. In order to see this, if we base our study on the method of discourse analysis suggested by Gee (2001), it is necessary to concentrate on the words and phrases the media used regarding Georgia (semiotic building and word building), what types of activities they presented as associated with Georgia (activity building), what kinds of relationships with corresponding values, attitudes, ways of acting and interacting they presented, especially regarding the relationship between the Georgian government and the separatist regions (socio-culturally situated identity and relationship building), how the media constructed the nature and relevance of the statuses of the separatist regions and sovereign Georgia, as well as the status of the Russian peacekeepers, and the nature and relevance of power between Georgia and the separatist regions (political building), and how the media presented the background of the conflict, its historical implications and the role of Russia in fuelling the conflicts (connection building). The building tasks presented above will not necessarily be named throughout the study, but they will underlie the process of collecting and categorizing the data presented in chapter 6.

3.4. Sources

In order to collect the findings for the study, popular internet news agencies and online versions of the most popular Russian newspapers were chosen to be analyzed. The sources were chosen according to the survey done by a popular portal superjob.ru (Superjob portal, 2007) about the most popular media outlets in Russia, as well as according to the BBC article on the press in Russia (BBC News, 2008). Although access to the internet among the Russian population is

relatively low, most of the selected sources are online versions of newspapers, which means that not only internet users have access to the information reviewed in this research, but other segments of population are likely to be exposed to the same information. All the articles to be reviewed in chapter 6 are originally written in the Russian language. Thus, they are translated into English by the researcher. For detailed review of the selected sources, see chapter 5.

Chapter four: The Background to the War

In this chapter, the background to the war between Georgia and Russia in August 2008 is given. In particular, the historical implications as well as more recent development of the events are described briefly.

4.1. Historical implications

Those who suffered the most in the Post-Soviet space are the Caucasus, the Balkans, and Central Asia. In all three of these regions, the collapse of Soviet power resulted into intense processes of securitization and severe wars took place both between states and within them. Many minority problems and border disputes exist in all these regions. "The resources for successful securitization are plentiful and the restraints against it far from overwhelming." (Buzan et al.,1998:67)

After collapse of Soviet Union separatist conflicts erupted in two territories of Georgia - Abkhazia and South Ossetia, accompanied by the civil war in the capital Tbilisi among Georgians - the proponents and opponents of the president. "On August 14, 1992, a fratricidal war broke out on the resort beaches of Abkhazia, a small territory located on the Black Sea coast of the newly independent Republic of Georgia. A 16-month conflict ensued between Abkhaz forces and the central government of Georgia. The Abkhaz fought for expanded autonomy and ultimately full independence from Georgia; the Georgian government sought to maintain control over its territory. Intensive battles raged on land, air and sea. Several thousand were killed and many more wounded on both sides." (HRW, 1995, 5) At the end of the conflict, "The Abkhaz attacks triggered a mass flight of Georgian civilians that international relief organizations roughly estimated at 230,000 to 250,000 people." (HRW, 1995:43) They still live as Internally Displaced Persons within Georgia or as refugees in other countries. According to the Human Rights Watch, Georgians constituted 50% of the population in Abkhazia, as opposed to 17 % Abkhazian, so the expulsion of Georgians caused a drastic change in the demographic situation there (HRW,1995:11). "The conflict in Abkhazia was heightened by the involvement of Russia, mostly on the Abkhaz side, especially during the war's initial stages. Whereas Russia has endorsed the territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia, Russian arms found their way into

Abkhaz hands, Russian planes bombed civilian targets in Georgian-controlled territory, Russian military vessels, manned by supporters of the Abkhaz side, were made available to shell Georgian-held Sukhumi, and at least a handful of Russian-trained and Russian-paid fighters defended Abkhaz territory in Tkvarcheli. The Russian role in this conflict has in part foreshadowed the brutal Russian behavior in Chechnya, and has contributed to a pattern of Russian disregard for human rights and violations of the laws of war.ö (HRW, 1995:7)

In South Ossetia it was a completely integrated and mixed Ossetian-Georgian population. There has been inter-marriage and a sense of common understanding going back to distant history (Totten, 2008). Historical name of South Ossetia is *Samachablo*, which means öthe land of Machabeliö ó an old Georgian noble surname. The usage of the term *South Ossetia* dates back to the 19-th century and is a part of the colonial policy, usually referred to as ödivide and ruleö. This strategy was reinforced by officially introducing the term öSouth Ossetiaö by the government of the Soviet Union in 1922, to prepare the ground for the dispute (Kvirikashvili, 2010). In 1992-93 Military confrontation in South Ossetia between South Ossetian separatists and Georgian government forces resulted in thousands of displaced people, the majority of which were ethnic Georgians. The conflict in South Ossetia was characterized by ösporadic Russian involvement overwhelmingly in support of the separatists.ö (HRW, 2009:16-17)

Both separatist wars ended with the deployment of Russian peacekeeping forces on the separatist territories. In 2006, Georgian parliament called for replacing the Russian peacekeepers with international police contingent, contending that Russia's öpeacekeepingö troops formed one of the main obstacles to peaceful resolution of the conflicts (Socor, 2006).

4.2. The melting of the “frozen” conflicts

The Rose Revolution (2003) was a popular bloodless revolution that brought Georgia's current president Mikheil Saakashvili to power and replaced Eduard Shevardnadze who governed the country in the öSovietö way. Saakashvili's pro-Western orientation, most notably his aspiration to join NATO, caused escalation of tensions in the relations of Georgia and Russia (Totten, 2008).

Russian embargo on Georgian products and the massive expulsion of Georgians from Russia in 2006 followed (Jibladze, 2006).

In April 2008, in Bucharest, Romania, Georgia was promised eventual membership of NATO but was refused Membership Action Plan (MAP). After Bucharest, the relationship between Russia and Georgia significantly aggravated. Russia started adding weaponry to its peacekeeping bases in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and increased the distribution of Russian passports to the people living in the separatist regions (Totten, 2008). On April 16 2008 Putin signed a presidential decree recognizing the documents of Abkhazians and South Ossetians in Russia and vice versa, thus integrating these two territories into Russia's legal space. In July Russia launched the biggest military exercise in the North Caucasus since the Chechnya war (Totten, 2008). At center stage in those maneuvers was Russia's 58th Army, that later played a key role in the war. The war between Georgia and Russia in the second week of August 2008 was the largest outbreak of fighting in Europe since the Kosovo war in 1999 (Toal, 2008:1). There have been allegations that Russia started to prepare for the invasion when Georgia was denied NATO Membership Action Plan (Whitmore, 2008). Soon after the war, Russia recognized the independence of the separatist regions of Georgia.

4.3. The Casualties

Based on the concept of *õworthyö* and *õunworthyö* victims, as one of the main expressions of manufacturing consent, it is interesting to see whether the information disseminated by Russian and Ossetian officials and the Russian media about the high number of Ossetian casualties was confirmed in the aftermath of the war.

According to the Germany's international broadcaster Deutsche Welle, despite the claims of Russia that more than 2,000 people had been killed in the fighting in the breakaway Georgian region of South Ossetia, the casualty figures had not been verified (Deutsche Welle, 2008). From August 8, 2008, Russian and South Ossetian officials repeatedly mentioned figures of civilian deaths ranging from 1,400 to more than 2,000. Human Rights Watch concluded that Russian figures often did not distinguish between civilian and combatant casualties, and that witnesses in South Ossetia often referred to volunteer fighters as *õciviliansö*, whereas under international

humanitarian law they are combatants. The genocide claims that Russia used to justify its military intervention were based on the high casualty figures, which also significantly influenced public sentiment in South Ossetia. For example, some of the local residents interviewed by Human Rights Watch justified the torching and looting of the ethnic Georgian villages by referring to "thousands of civilian casualties in South Ossetia," as reported by Russian TV channels. According to the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation Prosecutor's Office, on August 21 it had documented the deaths of 133 individuals. On December 23, 2008, Ria Novosti stated that 162 people killed in South Ossetia had been established. Following his visit to the region, Luc Van den Brande, the chairperson of the Ad Hoc Committee established by PACE to study the situation in Russia and Georgia, said on September 29, 2008 that "independent reports put the total number of deaths at between 300 and 400, including the military, i.e. these figures are far lower than those initially advanced in particular by Russia," and suggested that "i.e. the initial high numbers were inflated." (HRW, 2009:74-76)

Chapter five: The Russian Media

The chapter presents the information about the modern Russian media, and detailed description of the sources used for the findings, i.e. popular Russian online news agencies and Russian newspapers used in the thesis.

5.1. Review of the freedom of the Russian media

According to Freedom House report on media freedom in Russia, in 2008 it deserved the status: not free. The Kremlin relied on Soviet-style media management “to facilitate a sensitive political transition and deflect responsibility for widespread corruption and political violence.” (Freedom House, 2009) The report stated that authorities exerted significant influence on media outlets and news content. “Russia remained one of the most dangerous countries in the world for the media due to widespread lawlessness that allows politicians, security agents, and criminals to silence journalists by any means.” (Freedom House, 2009) Although freedom of speech and of the press is provided by constitution, the Kremlin used the country’s politicized and corrupt court to prosecute the few independent journalists who criticized the authorities. Several journalists were arrested, imprisoned, temporarily banned from working as journalists and had their newspapers closed. The Kremlin attempted to suppress news reporting of the country’s economic crisis and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin publicly told journalists not to report anything “unpatriotic,” and not to use the word “crisis” in their coverage. A number of government critics, including journalists, were charged with extremism. Local as well as international journalists were arrested, physically assaulted, even brutally beaten and had their equipment destroyed by the police when they tried to cover the severe abuses by the government officials. Authorities restricted coverage of human rights abuses in the North Caucasus, by local as well as by foreign journalists (Freedom House, 2009).

By 2009, at least 16 journalists had been murdered due to their work since 2000, and only one case was investigated, leading to an atmosphere of impunity encouraged by the authority. The trial of three suspects in the 2006 assassination of *Novaya Gazeta* journalist Anna Politkovskaya started at the end of 2008 without any information about who may have ordered the murder. Aggressive harassment by the Federal Security Service (FSB) and other government agencies forced some journalists into exile. The ownership of two of the 14 national newspapers, more

than 60 percent of the more than 45,000 registered local newspapers and periodicals, and, in whole or in part, all six national television stations and two national radio stations allowed the government to ensure that the press was filled with pro-Kremlin propaganda, particularly prior to the unfair March presidential election and during Russia's military invasion of Georgia in August. International radio and television broadcasting is also restricted; most private FM radio stations have been forced to stop rebroadcasting news programs or were relegated to less accessible short- and medium-wave frequencies. Private companies loyal to the government purchased influential private newspapers, and most media outlets depended on state subsidies, government printing, distribution, and transmission facilities (Freedom House, 2009).

In Press Freedom Index by Reporters without Borders, Russia was placed at 141-st in 2008, 153-rd in 2009 and 140-th in 2010 (Reporters without Borders, 2008, 2009, 2010). Due to the strict control of the Russian media and bloggers by the government officials, those bloggers who are critical to Kremlin, are subject to bribing attempts by pro-Kremlin bloggers in order to make them post comments or information promoting pro-Kremlin propaganda; they are also subject to attacks, imprisonment and inducement to state and self-censorship. The website of the independent daily *Novaya Gazeta* was paralyzed for a week in late January 2010 attacks (Reporters without Borders, 2011). The authoritarian policies of today's Russian leadership are seldom questioned, but despite one-sided reporting in the tabloids and state media, there are still some bastions of alternative information in the media (Eller, *Spiegel Online*, 2008). As it has been pointed out above, the journalists in Russia that deliver the alternative coverage of the events, sometimes do this even at the expense of their lives.

5.2. The media sources reviewed

The sources were selected according to the survey conducted throughout the territory of the Russian federation in October 2007 among 2500 Russian respondents above 18 who are active internet users and the BBC article which lists the newspapers in Russia according to the number of readers per issue (BBC News, 2008). *Lenta* and *Ria Novosti* are among the most popular online media outlets. They are followed by *Gazeta*, *Argumenti I Fakti*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, *Moskovskii Komsomolets* and *Novaya Gazeta* respectively (Superjob portal, 2007).

Lenta (*lenta* means film; website: www.lenta.ru) is a Moscow-based website in Russian language, owned by Rambler Media group which belongs to Prof Media, and is considered one of the most popular Russian language online resources with over 100 thousand visitors daily. The official website of Profmedia says that ProfMedia is one of the largest media and entertainment business in Russia with leading positions in quality entertainment. ProfMedia owns and operates a number of well-known consumer brands, including TV3, MTV-Russia and 2x2 in TV broadcasting; Avtoradio, a number of radios, Central Partnership in film production and distribution; Cinema Park in theatrical film distribution, etc. (Prof-media Holding, 2011).

Ria Novosti (Russian International News Agency), according to its website (www.rian.ru), is Russia's leading news agency with integrated multimedia newsroom, vast network covering over 45 countries of the world and the Russian regions, with the audience of millions, and combining media expertise with innovative technologies. Its predecessor was a Soviet Inform Bureau (Sovinformburo) in USSR, and Ian and Russian Information Agency, on whose basis *Ria Novosti* was created by the decree of the president of USSR Mikhail Gorbachov in 1990, and in 1991 was placed under the subordination of the Press and Information Ministry.

Gazeta (in English: newspaper) (website: www.gazeta.ru) is one of the most popular newspapers, and together with the newspaper Kommersant, is owned by the Russian oligarch Alisher Usmanov, who also owns mining/lumber and investment businesses and a number of other TV companies, publishing houses and stakes at popular web portals such as Facebook and mail.ru (the Forbes,2007); (the Forbes, 2009); (The Forbes,2011). *Argumenti I Fakti* (Arguments and Facts) is a weekly newspaper, published in the Russian language. It is widespread in the regions of Russia as well as in many countries around the world (SMI, 2010, *Argumenti I Fakti*). According to BBC, the popular *Argumenty I Fakty* weekly has the highest circulation of any Russian newspaper. Founded in 1978 it is characterized by political analysis and speculation, patriotic sentiment and high-profile interviews. One of Russia's largest banks, Promsvyazbank, has a controlling interest in the paper, which describes its readers as "working people, businessmen, intellectuals, politicians and managers." (BBC News, 2008)

Komsomolskaya Pravda (Komsomol Truth) is Russia's best-selling daily tabloid newspaper. Formerly a leading Soviet youth paper, it reached the height of its popularity in 1990, when it

entered the Guinness Book of Records due to its peak daily circulation of almost 22 million. It is characterized by nostalgia for the Soviet period, and firm backing for Kremlin policy. Russian energy group YeSN has been the newspaper's largest shareholder since 2007 (BBC News, 2008).

Rossiyskaya Gazeta (Russian newspaper or Russia's newspaper) is Russia's main fully government-owned newspaper established by the Russian government in 1990, before the collapse of the Soviet Union. The paper is entitled to publish all new laws, at which point the legislation enters into force. The paper's managing director has in the past denied the widespread view that it is the official government organ, instead describing it as an "independent media outlet" (BBC News, 2008). *Moskovskij Komsomolets* (Moscow Komsomol), according to a Russian website on media of Russia, is the most popular Russian newspaper. It is published in every big city of Russia since 1919, as well as in Europe and USA. Its news mostly are political, social and economic (SMI, 2011, *Moskovskij Komsomolets*). The paper focuses on covering issues of interest to people living in the capital, who are its main readers. It is known for its exposes of corruption among senior officials, and expresses broad support for the policies of Moscow's Yuri Luzhkov. Its editor-in-chief, Pavel Gusev, has been in the job since 1983, which is an unusually long period in Russia's volatile media market, and is believed to own much of the newspaper's stock (BBC News, 2008).

Novaya Gazeta (New Newspaper) publishes twice a week and is best known for its investigative journalism. It is often critical of the government and has been a vigorous opponent of Russian policy in Chechnya and North Caucasus. It is also known for exposing corruption and abuses of power in Russia's armed forces and is one of the few newspapers to provide detailed report on the liberal opposition. The paper was fully owned by its staff before former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and wealthy businessman Alexander Lebedev purchased a 49% stake in June 2006. In October 2006, the paper's most high-profile reporter, Anna Politkovskaya, was assassinated outside her home (BBC News, 2008).

Chapter six: Findings

This chapter presents the data collected from some of the prominent Russian news agencies and newspapers. The building tasks of the method of discourse analysis reviewed in chapter 3 served as the underlying basis for the collection and categorization of the data. The main coverage trends identified in the reviewed newspapers and news agencies are presented and categorized. Each article was coded and numbered according to the newspaper or news agency name. The full references corresponding each code are given in the reference list in Bibliography.

6.1. Reliance on particular sources, choice of words, giving particular order and amount of space to each perspective

Most of the news agencies and newspapers reviewed show the tendency to base their news on the sources representing mainly one side, as well as selection of topics and choice of particular words and phrases for each side. The sources that most mainstream media use are predominantly members of the Ministry of Defense of Russia, Russian MPs and officials, and authorities of the Georgian separatist regions, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Some headlines are more negative than the contents of the articles. Also, the information in the beginning of the majority of the articles is presented from the perspective of Russian, South Ossetian or Abkhazian sides. "Peacekeepers" almost always designate the Russian forces deployed in the separatist regions of Georgia, and "troops" or "soldiers" are almost often used to designate the Georgian forces. "Our tanks are rushing to the aid of peacekeepers." (KP8) "Georgian soldiers are shooting Russian peacekeepers" (LR6) "Georgian troops carried out an act of aggression against Russian peacekeepers" (LR2) "Peacekeepers are in a hard situation as they all the time are subject to shelling from their Georgian colleagues." (RN1) The status of Russian peacekeepers is not questioned. Russian "peacekeepers" are often used as sources for certain information, and what they say is in the majority of cases is stated as facts and not views, even though evidence or the comment from the other (Georgian) side is not presented. Mostly, no comment from the Georgian side neither Georgian perspective is given, or it mostly follows the opposing perspective and only little space is allotted to it. This trend prevails in a big number of news items (AIF11, RN1, RN2, RN8, RN15, RN16, RN17, RN18, RN57, RN59, LR1, LR2, LR6, LR3,

LR4, LR5, LR6, LR31, LR 32, MK1, KP3, KP4). Sometimes even when a slightly different perspective is presented, the above mentioned trend is still maintained. For example: “The head of peacekeeping operations of Georgian armed forces, Mamuka Kurashvili said, that in the shelling Russian peacekeepers may also be guilty.” (G15) Majority of the above-mentioned and other articles designate Abkhazia and South Ossetia as “unrecognized republic” or “the republic”.

6.2. The image of Mikheil Saakashvili

Many articles depict the government of Georgia, and especially Georgian President Saakashvili, as irrational, aggressive and determined to solve the conflict by military means. The President and the Government of Georgia as puppets used by the USA against Russia, attempting “to regain another nation under the submission of Tbilisi” and demonstrate “the image of a poor country oppressed by a powerful neighbor and daring to build democracy”, are depicted in an article by *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* (RG5). “Saakashvili Sees No Point In Agreeing With Sukhumi Not To Use Force” – this is the headline, which suggests the intention of Saakashvili to resolve the conflict by military means. However, the content of the article is somewhat different: “President of Georgia called the proposal of Russia to sign an agreement about no use of force – a pointless initiative” because, as he said, “Georgia does not intend to attack anyone anyway.” (RN36) Saakashvili is considered a “military Criminal .. who organized ethnic cleansing.” (RN30) To the question of the anchor, if there is a difference between Saakashvili and those judged by Haag Tribunal for war crimes, a Russian diplomat answers: “In fact, it is simply a complete copy, complete analogy.” (Ibid) Many articles about Saakashvili are usually accompanied by pictures where he looks aggressive, and is blamed for escalating the conflict (RN10, LR15, RN35). He is compared to Saddam Hussein, Shamil Basaev and even Bin Laden (G8), and presented as an aggressor or an irrational person of extremes, who always makes harsh, scandalous and unreserved statements towards Russia (RG8, MK6, G7, LR18 LR23, KP18). His proposals are presented as absurd to which Russians cannot find the words of reply. “Only hope is left that the sides will manage to agree on something, until the diplomat Saakashvili takes the matter in his hands.” – says a journalist of *Lenta* (LR16). Discrediting the image of Saakashvili is especially noticeable in the coverage during the first days of the Russian intervention in Georgia. An article in *Lenta* says that Saakashvili suffers from severe stress and

does not control himself, - the conclusion about the psychological condition of the president of Georgia drawn by a Russian professor based on some news clips shown on television with the participation of Saakashvili (LR17).

According to *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, the statements of Saakashvili, who is blaming Russia for all the troubles of Georgia, ... are subject to review in relevant medical institutions but not in the institutions of political power. (RG6) Another article says that president of Georgia is trying to regain his sole authority over Sukhumi, instead of attending to those holding the rally, demanding to carry out the reform of the authoritarian system of the government. (RG7) However, later in the article we read that regaining sole autonomy means that the president is ready to share power with the officials of Sukhumi, and grant Abkhazia almost unlimited autonomy. On the blog of *Moskovskiy Komsomolets* even now you can find the page full of pictures of ties and a video clip with Saakashvili. The website says: "How to make a knot in a tie, and at the same time not to chew it? The only request: if you do not succeed at once, don't start chewing the tie in the nervous breakdown, as Mr. Saakashvili was doing in front of millions of viewers. Ok? Then let's go!" (MK7) Another article with a caricature of Saakashvili is accompanied by the following sentence: "Let's Laugh At Saakashvili: Laughter Destroys Dictators", and "Cartooning is also a weapon against war. Let's fight the Georgians together. First, and the most militant of them Mishik... He needs to unite the nation somehow. And there is only one way to the war, as dictators do not know any other. First Put this picture in your diary, support the peace in the Caucasus! When a dictator is ridiculous, he is not scary." (AIF6)

6.3. Emphasis on Georgian opposition to the government

Portraying Saakashvili as an irrational bloodthirsty dictator is aided by the emphasis on the Georgian opposition. For example, *Ria Novosti* says that the leader of the oppositional labor party said his colleagues were summoned to the police who intended to reach to the party leader through them. Thus, he is requesting the European countries for political asylum (RN31). Another oppositional leader says their party leader was subjected to political persecution, and that the government is threatening with arresting her 15 year-old son for "hooliganism". "They (authorities) are trying to affect me, but first I will not make a step back" - she adds (RN32). "The

Day Of National Non-dependence” says that the day of independence of Georgia turned into a massive rally of opposition, who are unhappy with the results of the elections and are willing to change the government (G4). Another article says that members of Georgian opposition defiantly tore their mandates on the first day of the new parliament session, and that the pro-presidential party were sitting “in splendid isolation.” (G5) A number of other articles also show the trend of concentrating on Georgian political opposition (RN33,RN34,G6, LR30), whereas the information about other issues regarding the internal situation of Georgia is very seldom given.

6.4. Emphasis on the military situation of Georgia

Emphasis on the Georgian army also stands out in a number of news items, where the separatist leader of South Ossetia seems to be one of the most referred sources. According to him, Georgia is the most militarized country in CIS (RN26). Another article reviews the military reform of Georgia in recent years, and Georgia’s big funding on rearmament. “Georgia purchased modern military technique, which is higher in quality than that of South Ossetia and Abkhazia” In summer 2006 Ossetians had 87 tanks against hundreds of Georgian.” (LR13) MP of State Duma says: “Georgia spent a lot on arms recently, that means it was preparing for the war.” (G7) In his article Sergeev gives a detailed review of the history of snipers, followed by the description of Georgian snipers. He says that modern conflicts (Yugoslavia, Iraq, Afganistan, and South Ossetia) are characterized by intensive appliance of sniper units, used for producing psychological impact not only on troops, but also on civilians (LR14). An expert’s view that Georgia has one of the best armies in Post-Soviet space, and that it has 30 000 Georgian soldiers against 3000 South-Ossetia, is highlighted (MK4).

An article under an ironic headline: “Russian Army Is Arming Georgia” says that Georgia does not miss a chance “to catch” Russian militaries. Covering the arrest of four soldiers in Zugdidi region accused of arms smuggling to Georgian-Abkhazian conflict zone, the article shows a strongly negative connotation towards the action of Georgian police and claims the soldiers had the right to carry the arms (MK5). *Argumenti I Fakti* writes about increase in the size of the Georgian army, tightening weapons in the conflict zones by Georgia, “significant forces” (the phrase is in bold type in the article) of Georgia gathering at the town of Gori (AIF4, AIF5). A

journalist of *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* contends that Russians òdo not have to rely on the political consciousness of Georgian troops, as they cannot wait to try out their army, equipped with American weapons and trained by American instructors.ö (RG1) In *Ria Novosti* MP of State Duma says that Tbilisi òis armed and dangerousí ö (RN42) An article reviewing the Georgian, South Ossetian and Russian armies, concentrates on the Georgian. It starts with the description of the increased number of Georgian troops, as well as the support in training from US and Turkey. After describing the forces of South Ossetia, the author says: òSo, without the support of Russia the chances of South Ossetia to reflect the attack of Georgia could be regarded minimal.ö (LR27)

6.5. Russia as the protector and humanitarian supporter of the people of the separatist regions, or a mediator

Many articles present Russia as a mediator or committed to supporting peace and helping the people of the òunrecognized republicsö. The focus is on the aspiration of the separatist regions to be helped by, and even become part of, Russia, usually voiced by the same sources. The construction of Abkhazian railway by the Russian side is often highlighted as well as the fact that Georgia is against it. A number of articles portray Russia and Russian peacekeepers as the main providers of peace in the region (RN2, RN6, LR5, KP8, MK1, AIF1, G2, G9 RN40). A journalist, after listing the prohibitions adopted for each other by the South Ossetian and Georgian sides, ends the article with the words: òNaturally a question appears: when will the authorities of Tbilisi and Tskhinvali get common sense? Is it possible to reach complete absurd? for example to prohibit breathing the common air or to share the stars in the sky? í . Imagination of the national leaders is impressing - but not for their nations. í It affects the people, living on the Caucasian land. And Yandex has nothing to do with this.ö (RN3) (Since *yandex.ru* is a Russian website, the purpose of using the metaphor is obvious here).

Emphasis on Medvedev awarding Georgian famous artists or congratulating them with jubilees (RN4, RN5), is noticeable. We also read about Russian doctors/peacekeepers who will give collective aid to the residents of Abkhazia (RN8). Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia says that òBy Russian peacekeepers and on the expense of their lives peace in South Ossetia and Abkhazia has been maintained.ö (RN9) Medvedev's statement about Russia's determination to normalize

the relations with Georgia, but unwillingness of Georgia to do this is pointed out (RN1), as well as South Ossetia's urge for the increase of the number of the Russian peacekeepers (RN7). The actions of Russia are designated as "humanitarian intervention", aimed at "stopping the bloodshed and death of civilians, rather than capturing the territory of South Ossetia." (G1) In Putin's words "Russia has always played a positive and stabilizing role on the Caucasus ... and has been a guarantor of security, cooperation and progress in this region". Our actions are absolutely legitimate, moreover, necessary." (KP6) Priority is also given to presenting the interviews with Ossetians saying that all their hope is with Russia and who believe, that Russia will not leave them in trouble (RG1, MK4). "Peace in the zone of Georgian-Abkhazian conflict is supported by the Joint Peacekeeping Forces from CIS, consisting of Russian soldiers."- says *Ria Novosti* (RN11, RN41).

6.6. The status of the Georgian separatist regions

The description of the conflict in the 1990s is phrased in exactly the same way in a great number of articles, ignoring any role of Russia in the conflict. "South Ossetia, designated by the government of Georgia as Samachablo (in translation from Georgian land of nobleman Machabeli). One of the prohibitions adopted by the Georgian side is "not to recognize South Ossetia and to name it Samachablo." (RN3) The framing of the information about the old name of the region suggests that it was recently named so by Georgians, rather than carrying this name for centuries. Despite giving detailed historical account of the separatist conflicts of Georgia in the 1990s, the role of Russia is mentioned only in terms of the "peacekeeping contingent" or JPF, the massive expulsion of Georgians from Abkhazia is not mentioned, neither are the self-proclaimed republics presented as historical regions of Georgia. Their statuses in the majority of cases are designated as republics or unrecognized republics, and it is reiterated that they await recognition, rather than pointing out that by international standards they are parts of Georgia (RN1, RN2, RN8, RN15, RN16, RN17, RN18, RN55, RN 59, LR1, LR2, LR6, LR3, LR4, LR5, LR6, MK1, KP3, KP4, RG10).

6.7. Allegory to Kosovo's independence and "Kosovization" of the separatist regions

The tendency of equating Kosovo to the separatist regions of Georgia is evident in a number of reviewed news items and articles. For example, after talking about the escalation of tension in the Georgian separatist regions, a journalist refers to the unilateral recognition of independence of Kosovo, and says that Moscow could not ignore what happened in the Balkans, but, in order not to fan the flame, did not recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. However, in his opinion, after Kosovo Russia had a full right to treat Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the same way. (RN39)

According to another article, after the recognition of Kosovo the Kremlin openly started reconsidering the statuses of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The author says that while the recognition of Kosovo's independence is considered as a unique case by USA and Europe, in Abkhazia and South Ossetia it is regarded as a legal precedent. He argues that withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers from Abkhazia and South Ossetia and replacing them with international peacekeepers, as Georgia demands it with the support of USA, EU and Ukraine, will not solve the conflict and on the contrary, will lead to more violence in the region. Thus, his conclusion is that pacifying the region should be the primary aim, and only then maintaining territorial integrity of a country, or secession. Thus, according to the journalist, defining the status is not useful to Russia for the moment, but deferring the status is the best option to retain peace in the region. In the view of the journalist, the plan of Steinmeyer about the conflict resolution is contradictory, because massive return of Georgian IDPs to Abkhazia will lead to the resumption of violence, which was prevented by the Russian peacekeepers. He says that new peacekeepers can help Tbilisi break and defeat Abkhazia, but it will never make Abkhazians loyal citizens of Georgia (RN40). A state Duma MP states that the resumption of hostilities will encourage Russia to recognize the republics and introduce more troops. The article also quotes a South Ossetian official, according to whom, Ossetians say: how many of us should be killed for Russia to recognize us? (MK4)

Already in March, the article under the headline "What Awaits Georgia" wrote that State Duma will adopt a statement regarding unrecognized republics, judging by which Georgia had

better not enter NATO yet. í On one hand, state Duma supports the external politics of Russia, which respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia in the framework of its internationally recognized borders, but on the other hand, after Kosovo this system is in fact destroyed.ö According to the article, if Georgia enters NATO, this course will deprive it the right to consolidate the territory and the people living on it, and Russia will take all measures to defend the citizens of Russia, living in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and will consider the possibility to accelerate the objective process of sovereignty until the recognition of their independence.ö (MK9)

A leading political scientist says that Abkhazia in the future could become part of Russiaö and compares it to Kosovo (KP12). *Komsomolskaya Pravda* writes that the relations of Russia with Georgia became tensed after the recognition of the independence of Kosovo; Russia canceled trade-economic sanctions against Abkhazia, and Putin gave order to the government to give substantial helpö to the people of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In response, Georgia accused Russia that it is increasing its military presence on Georgian-Abkhazian border (KP13). In April *Rossiskaya Gazeta* wrote that the recognition of Kosovo and a strong aspiration of Georgia to NATO ömay force Moscow to react in the interest of its own national security.ö(RG10) An article published in the same newspaper in May says: öí if until now Russia has not raised the question about the recognition of South Ossetia, under the certain circumstances Moscow's position can change.ö (RG1) The same trend is obvious in other articles of *Ria Novosti* (RN39, RN43) and *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* (RG6, RG13, RG16).

6.8. Prospect of the accession of Georgia to NATO as a major threat for Russia

Georgia's aspiration to NATO is consistently presented as a threat to Russia or sometimes even to the world, against the interests of Russia in the region and the cause for Russia to recognize the independence of separatist regions of Georgia (AIF12, KP6, RN15, RN49, RN58, KP19, MK10, RG10, RG12). This trend is evident in the following examples: öHistorically so happened that all the post-Soviet space has been and is the zone of existential interests for Russia. So it is logical to see the further advance of NATO through this territory as aggression against Russia

(RN42). „The closer the change of status of Georgia regarding NATO, the clearer the steps of Russia about the recognition of the territories, uncontrolled by Tbilisi. Because any formal obligations, adopted by NATO, may be perceived by Georgia as a possibility to resolve the conflict in a violent way.“ (RN39) In “Russian Aggression”, having put the phrase into quotation marks, the author first reviews the negative rhetoric of the West towards Russia, and ends the article in a malignant tone: „Inter alia, in NATO, where Saakashvili was so rushing, now it will be even harder to get into. Not many will want to form a military alliance with a state embarking on ventures and suspect of war crimes.“ (LR23) On August 7, a state Duma MP, Konstantil Zatulin when asked, what will follow the resumption of hostilities, says that NATO takes decisions without Russia, but he cannot imagine that a decision can be made to give military support to Georgia (MK4). According to Lavrov (the Foreign Minister of Russia), the NATO membership of Georgia and Ukraine will have very serious consequences not only in the relations of Russia and United States, but also for Russia’s relations with NATO (RG13).

6.9. Georgia as the one who spoils the image of Russia in the eyes of international community and a pawn of the USA against Russia

Another trend identified is that Georgia in many cases is presented as committed to spoiling the image of Russia in the eyes of the international community. Some of the examples are: „Georgia Will Take Revenge On Russia In WTO“ (KP14); „Georgia Is Setting The World Against Russia“ (KP15). „Georgia Unleashed United Nations On Russia“ - according to the article, the resolution adopted by General Assembly of UN with the filing of Georgia is, of course, made Tbilisi terribly happy. The document gives the right of return to the refugees who had to leave Abkhazia during the bloodshed of 90s. It calls for other countries not to buy property in Abkhazia which may belong to the Georgian refugees/IDPs.“ The article ironically presents „the ridiculously brief list of countries“ which supported the resolution (KP16). A *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* journalist talks about a geopolitical game, where Tbilisi serves only as a pawn, creating a general tension in the Russian direction. He calls it the struggle for foreign purposes, main goal of which is „to weaken Moscow's influence in the Caucasus, to create an unfavorable information background for our country. It and to smuggle into NATO a certainly no-go figure on any criteria of the alliance - Georgia.“ (RG11) Another journalist says that Washington and its

“faithful warriors” mostly from Eastern Europe (which he calls new Europe) insist on inviting Kiev and Tbilisi into the alliance, while old Europe is worried by “inevitable deterioration of relations with Russia.” (RG13) Another article in *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* also says that many countries of EU are first of all oriented on good neighborly relations with Russia and understand Russia’s interests in Caucasus, and especially in Abkhazia and South Ossetia (RG6). The same trend is observed in another article in *Argumenti I Fakti* (AIF13).

6.10. Georgia as the deceptive “aggressor”, who abuses and discriminates against the people of the separatist regions

Many of the reviewed articles portray Georgians as those who abuse and discriminate against the people of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and disturb the Russian “peacekeepers”, or whose actions are irrational or unreliable/deceptive (AIF11, RN12, LR31). The above-mentioned trends are sometimes evident from only headlines, some of which contain more negative connotation about the Georgian side, than the actual information given by the contents of the articles. The proposal of Georgia to divide Abkhazia into the Russian and Georgia spheres of influence, for example, is termed as “fantastically crazy”, “absurd”, and it is stressed that Georgian government cannot look at the situation soberly (RN11). An article with an interesting headline: “Autonomies Are Called Into The Country Which Does Not Exist”, says that Georgia does not have “adequate mechanism to convince its former residents of attractiveness of accepting its jurisdiction. If Georgia aspires to blockade, suppression, blackmail, in order to get the people of South Ossetia and Abkhazia to their knees.” (RN2) Georgian actions as “fascism in open manner” and Georgia as “the country where fascism is state policy” are designated by *Gazeta*, where MPs of state Duma refer to PACE to publicly judge the actions of the Georgian side (G1,G3).

Lenta presents the perspective of the authorities of South Ossetia, saying that that the Ossetians detained by Georgian police for carrying arms and drugs, are hostages. Peacekeepers say this fact is “unacceptable”, and South Ossetia asked Georgia “to quit the bloody lawlessness.” (LR8) Another article also talks about four Russian peacekeepers who were arrested by Georgian police, accused of smuggling weapons and then “released to the world.” (G10) The framing of

the article also suggests that the actions of Georgia are groundless and inconsistent. An article in *Moskovskiy Komsomolets* says: “people are massively leaving South Ossetia and everyone knows that this is sacred obligation, to defend your home-country.” (MK2) Note the emphasis on the word “home-country”.

The author of an article about a propaganda operation by Georgian military propagandists warns the people that they should not believe “the fairy-tales” in Georgian online media (MK3). Georgia as affiliated to the explosions in the separatist regions is presented unquestionably (KP1). Other articles write about the attack and large-scale invasion from Georgia (KP3, KP4, KP5). We also read Putin’s speech according to which the actions of Georgia in South Ossetia “is a crime against Ossetian nation. It is an attempt to drag other states and other nations in its bloody adventures.” (KP6) Georgia is presented as bloody aggressor destroying settlements and “erasing them from the Earth.” (KP7) The tendency to present Georgia as the bloody aggressor is visible in a number of articles (KP9, AIF2 LR5, MK1 LR18). An expert predicts that Georgia will establish military regime in South Ossetia and will bring a new government to power which will be recognized by all the friends of Georgia (AIF1).

An article in *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* says that Russia will do anything to defend its businessmen, whose activities in Abkhazia are considered as unlawful by Georgia (RG2). It is interesting to compare this statement with contrasting information about another Russian businessman presented by *Novaya Gazeta*. The businessman who came from Moscow to invest in Georgia, “says happily: for the design of the building in central Tbilisi I paid 12 thousand dollars, and approved it for four years. In Moscow, it would be worth three million dollars and for one and a half year.” (NG3)

6.11. Allusions to terrorism and violence

The explosions taking place in Abkhazia and South Ossetia from July are designated as “terror”, “terroristic acts”, “aggression”, “provocations”, “sabotage”, “preparation for attack/invasion” organized by the Georgian side, in the majority of cases only by giving the perspective of those blaming the Georgian side. “Terroristic campaign”, “plans to destabilize the situation and terrify

the residents of the republic, a violent scenario, invasion from Georgia, actions of Georgia as a threat to the world, serious and aggressive intentions from Georgia to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Georgia as the most militarized country in CIS, Georgia's sniper war to South Ossetia - are repeatedly mentioned in *Ria Novosti* (RN13, RN14, RN15, RN16, RN17, RN18, RN19, RN21, RN22, RN23, RN24, RN25, RN26, RN27, RN28, RN29, RN56, RN59). President of Abkhazia says that Georgia is on the path of state terrorism. (KP2) Even in a single article abundance of allusions to terrorism can be observed: 'Friends of Georgia and international community indirectly support terrorism... Series of terroristic acts directed against the civilians'. Georgian authorities openly support terrorism ... International community closes its eyes on policies of terrorism (RN20) Abkhazian authorities opened a criminal case under the article 'terroristic attack' on the explosions in Abkhazia. They claim that these explosions, planned by the Georgian special services, are aimed at scaring Russian tourists (LR9). A member of security committee of state Duma, says: 'if you want peace, prepare for war. We have to prepare for terroristic acts from the Georgian side. There is information including the operational plan, that we have to expect terroristic acts on the territory of Russia.' (AIF3) Leader of Abkhazia uses an eloquent term: 'terrorist war', which was undoubtedly prepared in Tbilisi. (RG3) Same is the rhetoric in another article called 'Enjoy The Bombs' (RG4).

6.12. The casualties

In a number of news items, before and during the intervention, it is reiterated that a thousand, two thousand or more people died in the shelling. Answering the question of the anchor, if there is a difference between Saakashvili and those judged by Haag Tribunal for war crimes, a Russian diplomat says: 'In fact, it is simply a complete copy, complete analogy.' (RN30) *Lenta*, based on the estimations of representatives of South Ossetia, says the number of death toll is tens and hundreds (LR10), up to a thousand (LR6), 1500 (LR11), 2001 (LR12). *Gazeta* says 'President of South Ossetia declared about the death of 1400 people', and a South Ossetian official says that the number of casualties is 'probably a thousand, because everything is destroyed.' (G1) This trend of presenting inflated number of casualties is visible in some headlines, such as: 'Number Of Victims In South Ossetia Reached 2000', in which the source of the information, the ambassador of Russia to Georgia says that 'those who are guilty must be judged at

international tribunal.ö (KP10) öIt is impossible to count all the dead. Ossetians claim there are thousands of them. No wonder, as the city with civilians was bombarded and ironed. Corpses lay in the streets of Tskhinvalií ö (KP9) “Hundreds, if not thousands are dying.ö (RG3)

6.13. The necessity to take urgent measures expressed by journalists, political scientists and other members of the public

The trend of portraying Georgia as the aggressor, and presenting the inflated number of casualties, is followed by the concentration on the statements made by Russian officials and political scientists or journalists about the necessary measures that are to be undertaken in order to defend Russian citizens and öpeacekeepersö from öGeorgian aggressionö. Such statements are observed in a number of articles (RN46, RN47, RN48, RN49, RN51, RN54, G22 LR24, LR26, RG10). In *Komsomolskaya Pravda* already in May a political scientist says there are specific issues that Medvedev has to deal with promptly, such as Georgia (KP17). On August 8, in öTurnover In Tskhinvaliö, a journalist suggests öthe patrons close the unprofitable and unsuccessful projectö, (implying showing support to South Ossetia) öMoscow missed the moment for the involvement. This may not reduce its probability, but dramatically increased the severity of its consequencesí ö (G21)

On August 8 according to *Ria Novosti* about 40 people gathered at the building of MOD of Russia at the sanctioned rally supporting the unrecognized republic of South Ossetia. The rally welcomes öthe decision of MOD to support the Russian peacekeepers in South Ossetia. í They were holding flags with notes “Russia save Ossetia”, “Russian Army ó into South Ossetia”, “defend Tskhinval”. The people periodically chanted “tanks to Tbilisi.”ö (RN52) öThe invasion of Georgia into the unrecognized republic can be stopped only by Russia.ö - Says another author, but he thinks the large-scale involvement of Russian army into the armed conflict is faced with serious aggravation of international situation, and considers it more justifiable to provide indirect military aid, for example by way of directing additional peacekeeping forces and voluntary formations to the conflict zone. Thus he justifies the recent actions of Russian military-political authorities (LR28). A political scientist said that for Russia it is important to stop Georgia

“before Georgia decides to stop them after Georgian South Ossetia will emerge.” By phrasing his view in such a way, he leads the readers to think that Georgian South Ossetia never existed before. According to the analyst, the events in South Ossetia “are “the moment of truth for the Russian president.” (AIF10) Other articles where different officials and political scientists express their opinions, we read that in the given situation it is impossible to stand aside and the decision must be taken immediately, “if Russia does not want to lose face in its relations the international community and to betray the fellow citizens and soldiers, and that the aggressor must be punished by military means.” (AIF1, RG15) It must be noted that scarcity of Georgian perspective is especially visible in the articles mentioned in this sub-chapter, and the interviews with the residents also give only Ossetian perspective.

6.14. The necessity to take urgent measures expressed by Russian officials

Statements expressing the necessity of taking urgent forceful measures in relation to Georgia made by Russian government members and other officials were noticeable already in March, became more intense in April, and significantly increased in July and throughout August, during the intervention and occupation of Georgia by Russian armed forces. Some of the numerous examples of such statements are: “In case of the repetition of the similar actions all the responsibility will lie on the Georgian side”- Ivanov (RN45). “Russia will not leave the people, who have the citizenship of Russia and live in Abkhazia. . . Such a game, carried out by the Georgian side, may lead to bad consequences.” (RN15) The trend significantly increases in August. MFA of South Ossetia notes that South Ossetian side, “with the aim to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity and safety of its citizens leaves itself the right to adequate actions, all the responsibility for which will lie on the Georgian government.” (RN50) An MP talks about the necessity to change the policies of Russia in the region. “From the calls to peace . . . it is necessary to take decisive actions regarding the Russian interests on the Caucasus and citizens of Russia . . . and to promptly recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.” Adoption of the decision about South Ossetia and Abkhazia, he thinks, “has to be transferred from MFA to the apparatus of Security Council of Russia.” (RN42) Other statements and speech acts that deemed necessary and justified Russia’s invasion of Georgia, are the

following: Deputy chairman of Communist party said: "This is a genocide of Ossetian nation, but as a result of this genocide citizens of Russia are also dying. That is why Russia has to take decisive measures to protect its citizens. If the aggression is not stopped now, Abkhazia may become the next victim." (RN53) In the Kremlin extreme/urgent measures are being discussed "in order to protect the people who are there, with the consideration of peaceful mandate that we have about the protection of Russian citizens and national interests of Russia," informs the press-service of the president (G3).

A Russian MP says Russia has to "defend its borders" by using military force. "We should have recognized South Ossetia and Abkhazia long ago and include in the RF. That is why Russia is guilty in what is happening." (G7) Representative of Russia Vitaliy Churkin called UN to intervene in the conflict with the aim of stopping the violence (AIF10). An article presents interviews with Ossetians, as well as Medvedev's speech, who says: "We will not let the death of our compatriots go unpunished, the guilty will be punished. In accordance with the Constitution, the president of Russia, I am obliged to protect the lives and dignity of Russian citizens." (KP9) Dmitriy Medoev stated about the necessity for military interference in the conflict. In his words, it is necessary in order to stop the war and return the conflicting sides to the negotiation table. The Kremlin, discussed "complex measures about the return of the situation in the conflict zone to the peaceful flow" (LR29) and "Medvedev Promised To Punish Georgia" (LR25) A reinforcement was directed to aid Russian peacekeepers to "assist them in stopping the bloodshed." (LR25)

6.15. Seemingly critical perspective

Many seemingly critical articles criticize the government only on the superficial issues, in this way still presupposing the official perspective regarding the bases of the government policies, as for example does the journalist in RN40. A *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* journalist says that Russia does not need to interfere in a conflict of another country, as it would be "madness" and damage its international image. He contends this war would be unpopular in Russia (RG9). Russian government is also criticized for its "late response" (G23), high economic costs of the war (G24), or Medvedev's indecisiveness to intervene (G21). On 10 July Valentin Rakhmanov criticized

Russian policies regarding Georgia, arguing that high officials of Russia are against Georgia's entry in NATO, but he thinks Russia's actions in relation to Georgia are "hard to understand". Abkhazia and South Ossetia, in the view of the author, are only "levers" for Russia "to achieve any goals in Georgia." But if so, he wonders why the levers have not been yet activated and have been kept in a frozen position for years. He also wonders why Russia did not question the referendum which decided the entry of Georgia in NATO, and received these results "surprisingly calmly", if it is decided "not to let the Caucasian republic into NATO." The author thinks Russia's policies towards Georgia are "hard to understand" and there is no "firm course of Russia in relation to Georgia." (RN44) Another political scientist expects "maximally harsh statement" from Moscow, although to the extent which will not change Russia into the conflict party. He argues that if Russia responds with force, this will give Saakashvili the possibility to "expose Russia in the eyes of the international community as an active conflict participant on the side of South Ossetia." (G22)

6.16. Alternative perspective

6.16.1. Relative use of Georgian sources, and delivering alternative views

Certain amount of Georgian sources or Georgian perspective is also presented in some articles. *Novaya Gazeta* significantly differs from the mainstream coverage of the issues related to Georgia and always presents a contrasting perspective, but certain amount of alternative views is also noticeable in other news agencies and newspapers, although to a very limited extent (G11, G12, G14, G15, G16, G19, G20, MK8, KP11, AIF7, AIF8). The words such as "separatists", "de facto" or "self-proclaimed" occasionally appear in media outlets that disseminate a different view on the events (NG1, G11,). Same can be said about using "Russian soldiers" or "Georgian peacekeepers" (G9, NG7). It is worthwhile to note that alternative perspective in most of these articles is represented by occasionally choosing the words different from the mainstream articles. Also, many of these show seemingly critical perspective, without giving deep criticism of the government policies. Those who express serious criticism towards the official views or present

alternative and Georgian perspective, do this at the expense of their lives, as it was said in the review about the Russian media in chapter five, particularly about *Novaya Gazeta*.

6.16.2. The status of Russian peacekeepers

Critical views regarding the status of the Russian peacekeepers are also voiced in some media to a limited extent. An article in *Lenta* says that the declaration of universal mobilization and the recruitment of volunteers are likely to undermine the reputation of peacekeepers (precisely as peacemakers and not a military unit deployed in the zone of conflict). Thus, the journalist questions the “controversial” status of the “Russian peacekeeping operation” in the conflict zone. According to him, bombarding other parts of Georgia outside South Ossetia definitely cannot be called a peacekeeping operation (LR22). An article in *Gazeta* says that there is no clear legal basis for the deployment of Russian troops on the territory of South Ossetia. Even though according to the MOD of Russia, to the aid of the peacekeepers additional reinforcement is sent, the actions of the peacekeepers in the Georgian-Ossetian conflict zone are controlled by the joint control committee for the Georgian-Ossetian conflict resolution, that has not made any decision about calling in reinforcement (G1). A famous Russian military expert Felgenhauer states that as some Russian generals admitted, the manpower that entered Abkhazia were not additional peacekeepers, but battalion marines (400 men) with the standard weapons, including armor, air defense and artillery, “which the peacekeepers are not entitled to under the cease-fire in Abkhazia. “They will not replace our peacekeepers.” (NG4)

6.16.3. Criticizing Russia for its policies in relation to Georgia

Some critical views regarding Russian policies in relation to Georgia appear in some of the reviewed media. In “The Complex Of Big Brother” the author says: “Majority of our co-patriots are impatiently waiting when a powerful punch of the Russian army which has stood up for the Russian citizens of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, will lead to the fall of the hated regime of Saakashvili. Laymen can be forgiven “they do not know what can replace this jubilant expectation”. The author blames the politics of the Soviet Union for negatively affecting the

psychology of all the people of the Soviet Union, producing "Post-Soviet syndrome of the Russian solitude". He criticizes Russia for its attitude towards Georgia and says the conflict is caused by "the big brother complex" of Russia, which cannot tolerate the independence of former Soviet republics. This article stands out as explicitly critical towards Russia for its imperial policies, and by questioning the right of Russia for failing to treat Georgia as a sovereign country (G17).

6.16.4. Georgia as a rapidly developing democratic country with a reformer president

Unlike the mainstream trend of focusing on Georgian opposition and military reforms in Georgia, some alternative perspective on the internal situation of Georgia is also presented. The journalist of *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* admits, although on a single occasion throughout the whole article, that the building of a new democratic Georgia is going quite successfully (RG9). *Novaya Gazeta* presents a completely different perspective on the development of Georgia. Portrayal of the internal situation of Georgia under the post Rose Revolution government is given in the article called "Ruthless Model Of A Free State: Politically Incorrect Report From The New Georgia", in which the journalist who visited Georgia gives her impression about the changes taking place there. She describes the situation in the Autonomous Republic of Adjara before the Rose Revolution and says that when Adjara was ruled by the dictator Abashidze, his son was the mayor of the city, his relatives were heads of KGB and MIA, and Abashidze clan was controlling everything, including the smuggling of drugs. Comparing times before and after the Rose Revolution, the journalist says: "At that time we strolled along the embankment, resting in a garbage dump. Behind us were machine guns, and above us hung the portraits of Abashidze. Now the embankment is three times longer, and instead of portraits there are advertisements of free Wi-Fi, acting on the entire length of the promenade." She talks about the constant construction going on in this region. "In Adjara opposition won 40% of the votes. 'Why?' she asked a local businessman. 'What do you want? The authorities to receive 99% of votes, as it was during the time of Abashidze?'- the businessman replies. Police do not take bribes, as before. 'Patrol police in omnipresent. It is on the streets everywhere and comes on call within two minutes'... Police of Georgia is a kind of a national landmark, and 'no crime is

left unpunished now.ö Before the Rose Revolution, there was no state. Instead, the state was Shevardnadze. Shevardnadze respected all the good old Georgian traditions, such as homage of his friends, intellectuals, and thieves in law. His son-in-law owned cell-phone company. His cousin owned the oil business. Saakashvili is building free independent Georgia, relentlessly hurrying, because he has not much time, because in his chosen model, presidents are leaving, and the wheel of history is always on people, and people, as always, do not like that.ö (NG3)

6.16.5. Presenting the Georgian perspective on the Russian intervention

Some articles present Georgian view of the conflict and depict Russia as the aggressor invading a sovereign country. The designation of the massive giving out of Russian passports by Russia to the residents of Georgian separatist regions as "creeping annexation" of Georgia, and Georgia's accusation of Russia in "illegal increase of manpower and military equipment under the guise of the CIS Joint Peacekeeping Forces" is also mentioned (G9, G11, G14, MK8, LR16). It is said that the Georgian president is accusing Russia of long-prepared invasion, contending that the time of Beijing Olympic games was chosen deliberately, as the majority of American politicians were on leave, and his comparison of the situation in Georgia with Russia's invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Finland in 1939 is also given, as well as Saakashvili's statement that Georgia is defending itself from the Russian aggression (LR6, G1). Another article talks about the indignation of Georgia, caused by the meeting of Russian president with "the leader of the separatist regime who carried out ethnic cleansing of Georgians in Abkhazia."ö "We compel the Russian side not to forget that UN unequivocally supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia and pays special attention to the IDPs' dignified and safe return to their homes"ö says the declaration made by the Georgian government (RN37). Denial of the charges about being involved in the explosions or attacks on the Russian peacekeepers by the Georgian side is also presented: "This aggression is aimed at making Georgia give up North Atlantic orientation."ö (RN38, G18)

Another journalist talks about the irrelevance of the accusations of Russia towards Georgia with the actual events, saying that Russia is likely to use the further integration of Georgia into the alliance as the excuse for increasing its military existence in Abkhazia and South Ossetia

(LR19). Georgian version, according to which the war was the excuse for Russia and Abkhazia to ignore the German plan of Conflict resolution, is presented (LR21). The article "Coercion To Peace" says that Russia calls for peace and bombards Georgian airfields (LR22). An article in *Novaya Gazeta* says that Saakashvili, accusing Russia of de facto annexation, stated that in Moscow "different bosses" have repeatedly told him that "it is decided not to give Abkhazia back, but they did not explain who, why and how made this decision." President of Georgia in his interview with Russian journalists states that he is ready to go to Moscow for direct negotiations, but no one is inviting him there. According to him, there is no concentration of Georgian troops near Abkhazia at all. It is Russia, that exacerbates the situation or reduces the stress, as it wishes." (NG4)

6.16.6. Russia's long-planned invasion

According to *Novaya Gazeta*, Russia was for a long time preparing the invasion of Georgia. On July 5, with the reference to the famous Russian military analyst Pavel Felgenhauer, the newspaper said a military source has confirmed that in August Russia will begin an aggressive war against Georgia, and "Putin's circle have already decided to start a war with Georgia in August." The expert said that Russia will act according to the following scenario: An armed conflict will begin, which will grow into war. Security officer Baranov, head of the site said: "the army wants to fight" describing the prevailing atmosphere in the Russian army, and that Moscow is threatening Georgia with large-scale military conflict. "In this regard, obviously, all the statements and accusations made by Russia and Abkhazia to Georgia should be considered only in the context of the military plan of Moscow, which is purposefully and methodically preparing for the 'X' hour." (NG6)

One of the most famous Russian economists Andrey Illarionov describes in detail the events preceding the war: he talks about the provocations carried out by Ossetians from July to August, which he calls "the war of medium intensity". According to him, on August 2 four crews of the central Russian television stations with all the necessary equipment arrived from Moscow in Tskhinvali "to cover the impending war, about which in Georgia no one had guessed yet." Foreign journalists were banned from entering South Ossetia, which the Russian foreign ministry

explained by the problem with their documents. On August 2 the training called "Caucasus" officially ended, but the Russian troops taking part in the training, did not leave their positions. The number of Russian and Ossetian "peacekeeping" battalions grew from 1000 to 1500 soldiers, whereas the number of Georgian peacekeepers stayed the same – 500. Ossetian authorities on August 2 started evacuating children and women, and by August 7 over 20 000 citizens had been evacuated from South Ossetia. The author says the number of evacuees achieved exactly the same proportion as during the Kosovo crisis in 1999, but with a significant difference. Kosovo Albanians had fled their homes since the beginning of ethnic cleansing conducted by the Yugoslav army. In South Ossetia, ethnic cleansing of Georgian population was conducted by the South Ossetian units after the evacuation of South Ossetian women and children. Even on August 2, almost simultaneously different Russian officials made statements promising that Russian forces would enter Georgia to "protect Russian citizens and to help the peacekeepers". Initiators and leaders of the war made it no secret that the coalition of Russian-Abkhazian-Ossetian forces could go further than the territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Russian mercenaries and journalists kept arriving. Illarionov says that the newspaper *Izvestia* (News) proudly reported that volunteers arrived in South Ossetia even from Moscow, and a journalist of *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (Independent Newspaper) wrote on her blog on August 6, that she saw with her own eyes how Russia was strengthening its military presence in Georgia. Zaur Alborov, speaking on behalf of the South Ossetia military command, in his notes on the forum milkavkaz.net, is counting the hours before the start of the full scale war: "August 2 – "Training" Kavkaz-2008" is complete, everything has worked out, now we evacuate the civilians, carry out the mobilization, and then some people will be in big trouble". On the evening of August 6, Saakashvili tried to urgently contact Medvedev by telephone, to discuss the dangerous developments in South Ossetia. Response of the Russian Foreign Ministry, which organizes the telephone conversations between presidents, was cold: "The time for the negotiations between the presidents has not yet come." (NG7)

6.16.7. The separatist regions of Georgia

Some media present the leadership of separatist regions as corrupt mercenary pawns for Russia, carrying out provocations against Georgia. Andrey Stenin, journalist of *Gazeta*, after his tour in South Ossetia, is criticizing South Ossetian de-facto government and emphasizes the unfavorable situation and the corruption he confronts there. “The word provocation is heard everywhere. Georgians are accused of everything. Tskhinvali is celebrating the day of Transnistria. Billboards with the pictures of the president, and the slogan to the colorful aim. Because of the colorful aim whole Tskhinvali looks like a cantonment.” (G13) In *Novaya Gazeta* already in April Pavel Felgenhauer wrote that Putin is strengthening ties with the self-proclaimed republics in Georgia, which is the first step towards the recognition. Simultaneously, Putin established transport and postal blockade with Georgia. Thus, the author ironically concludes: “We show both, carrots and sticks: we can recognize the separatist regimes that can shoot down drones, and neither the West, nor NATO, which Georgia aspires to, can stop it.” (NG1) Another article in *Novaya Gazeta* also depicts drastically different images of the participants of the conflict. It says that the Abkhazian foreign minister has declared their intention to take further part of Georgian territory for the creation of the “buffer zone.” Obviously, it is assumed tentatively that the population will be driven out. Moscow and Sukhumi accused Tbilisi of the preparation of an attack, but in Georgia any direct combat preparations are not noticeable. Moreover, the prospect of war is not with the separatists, but directly with Russia, which is causing great alarm in Georgia. (NG5) Pavel Felgenhauer says Ossetia is provoking the war with all possible and impossible means. “Now not only Georgians, but also peacekeepers admit that Ossetians lie all the time.” (MK4)

6.16.8. EU, NATO and USA as models for Georgia in terms of the norms and principles

Rather than depicting Georgia as the puppet of USA against Russia in the struggle for dominance in the region, the alternative media coverage highlights the roles of USA, EU and NATO as models for Georgia in terms of the norms and principles of democracy. Leonid Radzikhovski, a political scientist, after posing the questions about the reasons for Russia not to let Georgia and Ukraine into NATO, as well as trying to account for the aspirations of these countries towards

NATO, draws the conclusion that Ukraine and Georgia aspire to NATO and EU because of the European norms ó in law, ecology, human rights, etc. He argues that NATO is a step which approaches them to Europe. According to the analyst, the reason behind the dissatisfaction of the Russian politicians and political scientists with Georgia's North Atlantic orientation is closely linked to the loss of political influence, and also "because it is necessary to imitate an active political life for voters ó if not in internal, at least in external politics. Because an image of an enemy is needed." (RG14) Yulia Latinina says: "Saakashvili's Georgia follows USA not in the sense this phrase is used by our home-grown paranoids. United States ó this is not the owner, but the model. The model of an independent free state." (NG3)

6.16.9. Russia spoils the image of Georgia in the eyes of the international community and prevents the accession of Georgia to NATO

In alternative media Russia is presented as determined to spoil the image of Georgia in the eyes of the international community and does everything to prevent the accession of Georgia to NATO. The main topic discussed by Baskov in *Lenta*, is that Russia is categorically against Georgia's membership of NATO. "According to the charter of NATO, the country candidate should not have a territorial or ethnic conflict. Which is more beneficial for the Kremlin? To contribute to the resolution of the 15 year-old Georgian-Abkhazian conflict or prevent Georgia's accession to NATO? The question is rhetorical." (LR20) In its press review in May 2008 *Novaya Gazeta* wrote that Russia defames its neighbors in the eyes of NATO (NG2). According to Georgian officials, Russia is arming Abkhazian separatists, in order to provoke war and deprive Georgia of chances to join NATO. Minister of Interior affairs of Georgia stated that Russia is pushing Abkhazia into confrontation and providing it with arms. "If there is war, if there is at least one shot from Georgian side, Georgia will not become a member of NATO" ó admits the official. The article says Georgia has become "the point of tension" in Russia-NATO relations. According to one theory, Moscow intends to integrate South Ossetia and Abkhazia into Russia. According to another version, the Kremlin wants to draw Georgia into an armed conflict to bury hopes of the neighboring states to join NATO. "Russia does not want to be in the grip of former Soviet and now pro-Western republics, which are ready to place elements of U.S. space

shield on its territory, as well as hosting the NATO forces. Thus, the conflict in Georgia is not just regional: it unfolds the struggle to establish global balance, says *Novaya Gazeta* (NG2).

6.16.10. Georgia and Russia as neighboring countries sharing the same history; Call for “awakening”

It seems appropriate and even symbolic to finish the review of the findings by presenting an article of *Novaya Gazeta*, called “Eclipse”, in which the author with anti-war lyrical rhetoric urges Russia to “wake up”, reminiscing on the historical tie of the two neighboring countries. Contemplating on April 9 1989, known as April 9 tragedy, when an anti-Soviet demonstration was dispersed by the Soviet Army, resulting in 20 deaths and hundreds of injuries, the author calls for the government of Russia as well as Russian people to “wake up” and ponder on all the victims that the irrational policies have caused. He emphasizes the centuries-long friendship between Georgian and Russian people, and quotes the sentence from a recent letter from his old Georgian friend: “Is it possible that the aircraft released from your home in Moscow, from which I have the keys, would bomb my house in Tbilisi, the key to which you own?” he asks, adding: “And you, gentlemen, presidents, MPs, military, diplomats – wake up! Look at what you have done! Our soldiers reside in the same brotherly mass graves of the Patriotic War. Our prisoners were shot by the same machine guns. And those who were not killed – were rotting in the same camps. Our languages are intertwined with brilliant translations of Georgian and Russian poets. Our cultures, developing on their own, are rooted in the same land, in one faith, relating with roots. We even have one horror and shame – Bolshevism and Stalin. – do not provoke each other. You get the lordly undertaking – tickling vanity and pride. We get – sorrow of the loss. – Are we tools in the suspicious games of patriots? We give soul to our countries. Without us, they are not. And those who make the decisions, either. No one exists without us. We are supposed to declare this role.” (NG8)

The different trends identified in the coverage of Georgia-related issues by the mainstream and alternative Russian media, are summarized and compared in Table 1.

Table 1: The contrasting messages delivered to the Russian people by the mainstream and alternative Russian media.

Mainstream Russian Media Messages	Alternative Russian Media Messages
Reliance mainly on one sided sources, choice of words	Using different sources and presenting different perspectives
Saakashvili is presented as aggressive dictator inclined to solving the conflicts by force	Saakashvili is presented as a reformer president building a free democratic state
Georgia is presented as discriminating against the people of the separatist regions and the Russian peacekeepers	Georgia is presented as the victim of the provocations triggered by Russia in order to carry out its long-planned invasion
Georgia is portrayed as the pawn of the USA and the West against Russia	USA EU and NATO are presented as models of democracy for Georgia
Georgia spoils the reputation of Russia in the eyes of international community	Russia spoils the reputation of Georgia in the eyes of the international community
Accession of Georgia to NATO is presented as a big threat for Russia	Accession of Georgia to NATO is perceived by Russia as the loss of influence
Kosovo is presented as the precedent for the recognition of the Georgian separatist regions by Russia	Kosovo is presented as an excuse for Russia to recognize Georgian separatist regions in order to prevent Georgia from entering NATO
Georgia is presented as unwilling to hold negotiations	Proposals of negotiations from Saakashvili are unaccepted by Russia
Georgian separatist regions are designated as republics or unrecognized republics	Georgian separatist regions are designated as self proclaimed republics or separatists
Georgian separatist regions are depicted as victims of the Georgian aggression	The separatist leaders are depicted as mercenaries making provocations against Georgia
Russia is presented as the peaceful and humanitarian supporter of the separatist regions	Russia is presented as the military supporter of the separatist regions using them as levers against Georgia
Georgia is presented as a threat for Russia and the whole region or the world	Georgia is presented as a brotherly neighbor of Russia, sharing the same faith and history

The table shows how different types of media can portray drastically different pictures of reality and thus account for the contrasting viewpoints existing among the public. However, as regards the Russian public, it is worthwhile to note that the amount of the alternative perspective presented in the Russian media is significantly less than the amount of the official perspective identified in the mainstream media. A large amount of the critical perspective only superficially appears critical, giving the impression of debate, which is still based on the official line of thinking, in this way even more effectively serving to reinforce the official views in the minds of the people. The only newspaper out of the eight reviewed, *Novaya Gazeta*, which voices a totally different perspective and criticizes the government on the intervention and not on the superficial issues (as does the seemingly critical mainstream media), is the least popular according to the surveys which determined the choice of the sources for the study. This significantly small amount of genuinely critical dissent presented in the reviewed Russian media, and the low popularity of the newspaper voicing completely different and deeply critical perspective, gives us possibility to contend that the mainstream Russian media coverage must have had a great impact on establishing the Russian public opinion regarding the Russian intervention in Georgia in 2008. This will be analyzed more profoundly in the following chapter of analysis.

Chapter seven: Analysis

In this chapter, the data given in the previous chapter will be summarized, and measured against the results of the Levada Center presented in the introductory chapter as well as analyzed according to the theoretical frames of the study. This will be done by simultaneously answering the research questions posed in the introduction.

7.1. How did the Russian media portray Georgia before and during the intervention (from March till August 2008)?

Summarizing the findings presented in the previous chapter will provide the answer to the first research question, that is, how the Russian media portrayed Georgia before and during the intervention (March till August 2008), and will also facilitate answering the second and third research questions. The findings show that reliance on the sources representing one side was characteristic of the mainstream Russian media coverage before and during the Russian intervention in Georgia in 2008. They also reveal the trend of choice of words such as Russian peacekeepers versus Georgian troops/soldiers, and allotting more space to anti-Georgian rhetoric. Status of the Russian peacekeepers is not questioned in the mainstream media.

President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili is presented as an aggressive and irrational dictator determined to solve the separatist conflict by force, and as the culprit of the war. Saakashvili and the government of Georgia are both presented as extremely aggressive, undemocratic, unreliable, and discriminating against the residents of its separatist regions, although regarding Saakashvili such portrayal is more explicit and toned up. Furthermore, Georgian president and the government are depicted as the pawns used by the USA against Russia in the struggle for dominance in the region, and aiming to spoil the image of Russia in the eyes of the international community. The prospect of the accession of Georgia to NATO is presented as a major threat for the security of the Russian state. This trend is reinforced by focusing on Georgian opposition to the government and presenting them as the victims of the dictator and the undemocratic regime, which is intolerant of opposing views and attempts to silence them with persecution. Georgia is also described as a military state spending a big funding on weapons and army. The focus on the military side of Georgia naturally contributes to its image as aggressive and inclined to resorting to violence, which is exacerbated by repeated allusions to terroristic acts affiliated with Georgia.

Many articles present Russia as a supporter of peace and helping the people of the unrecognized republics. Separatist regions are mainly presented as victims of the aggression of the Georgian government. The trend of comparing the Georgian separatist regions to Kosovo and referring to the recognition of their independence is also evident. The role of Russia in the separatist conflicts since the 1990-s is mentioned only in terms of the Russian peacekeeping contingent, whereas massive expulsion of Georgians from Abkhazia is ignored, neither are the self-proclaimed republics presented as historical regions of Georgia. The statuses of the separatist regions in majority of cases are designated as republics or unrecognized republics, and it is reiterated that they await recognition, rather than pointing out their internationally recognized statuses as parts of Georgia.

Another visible trend is presenting inflated numbers of casualties in South Ossetia, especially before and during the first days of the intervention. The trend of portraying Georgia as the aggressor, and presenting the inflated number of casualties, is followed by the concentration on the statements made by Russian officials and political scientists or journalists about the necessary measures that are to be undertaken in order to defend the Russian citizens and peacekeepers from Georgian aggression. The necessary measures are in most cases framed as using force to stop the bloodshed and punish Georgia for abusing of Russian citizens and peacekeepers, or even for genocide. The additional forces and weapons sent by Russian government to Georgia are designated as reinforcement to aid the peacekeepers.

Some journalists seem to actively criticize Russia for its policies in relation to Georgia, hence giving an impression of a lively debate. A journalist criticizes Russia for keeping the levers, i.e. separatist conflicts, in a frozen position for years, rather than activating them, and for not questioning the referendum in Georgia which decided the entry of Georgia into NATO. Russia is also criticized for the late response, using outdated weaponry, high economic costs of the war and its negative consequences in terms of international image of Russia. President Medvedev is criticized for his indecisiveness to intervene, and so on. However, the right of Russia to intervene in a sovereign country, is hardly questioned.

By contrast, some articles in different media and mostly in *Novaya Gazeta* dare to give a balanced and even critical view on Georgia-related issues and the 2008 August war. Certain amount of diversity of sources and perspectives is noticeable in some articles, although to a

limited extent except for *Novaya Gazeta* and partly *Gazeta*. *Novaya Gazeta* gives a drastically different perspective on the war and presents Georgia as a developing country with a reformer president, whereas Russia is presented as the aggressor, determined to damage the reputation of Georgia in the eyes of international community, and creating an image of an enemy out of NATO and Georgia in order to increase the number of voters. Statuses of the separatist regions are designated as self-proclaimed or separatist, and separatist leaders as corrupt and deceptive provokers of war as well as the pawns used by Russia to achieve its aims. Questioning the status of the peacekeepers is also noticeable in the alternative media. Their status is designated as "controversial" and it is pointed out that bombarding different parts of Georgia cannot be considered a peacekeeping operation. It is said that the peacekeepers are not entitled to the weaponry provided to them and the forces sent from Russia do not represent the reinforcement to the peacekeepers. The roles of USA, EU and NATO as models for Georgia in terms of the norms and principles of democracy are highlighted. Russia is criticized for its attitude towards Georgia, designated as "the complex of big brother", by exposing its failure to treat Georgia as a sovereign country.

7.2. To what extent can the positive attitude of the Russian public towards Russia's intervention in Georgia be attributed to the Russian mainstream media coverage?

The answer to the first research question presented above, logically leads to the second research question, that is, how the Russian media may have contributed to forming the Russian public's positive attitude towards Russia's intervention in Georgia. To answer this question, the trends reviewed above have to be measured against the results of the polls conducted in August 2008 presented in Russian Analytical Digest. Significant rise in the public approval of Putin and Medvedev's policies after August 2008 may be partly attributed to the above mentioned trends. The trend of presenting Georgian separatist regions and their people as victims of the Georgian aggressive regime may possibly account for the view of 70%, who thought that Russian leaders did everything to prevent the conflict between Georgia and South Ossetia. Efficient media delivery of the statements made by Russian officials, experts or journalists that portrayed Georgia as a threat, and Georgian government and primarily president Saakashvili as aggressive irrational and violent, as well as the failure of Russian mainstream media to challenge the right

of Russia to invade the sovereign neighbor supposedly lead to the public view of 78 %, who approved of the decision of the Russian leadership to send troops to South Ossetia to conduct a military operation. The above mentioned trend, accompanied by ignoring the full picture regarding the history of the separatist conflicts, is likely to have lead to the result according to which the majority of Russians in 2008 thought South Ossetia and Abkhazia were independent states rather than integral parts of Georgia and also according to the majority of Russians if South Ossetia and Abkhazia applied to join the Russian federation, Russia should accept them.

The identified trend of presenting Georgia's Western orientation and aspiration towards NATO as a big threat for Russia's role in the region, may account for the survey result according to which in August 2008 in the opinion of 66 % of Russians, the leaders of Western countries supported Georgia in order to weaken Russia and push it out of Caucasus, and the majority also thought the main trigger for the war was that USA wanted to extend its influence to the countries bordering Russia. Thus, it can be concluded that the Russian media may have had a significant impact on the positive attitude of the majority of Russians towards their government's policies in relation to Georgia in 2008. This argument is reinforced by the survey which served as the basis for choosing the sources of the study, according to which the media outlets showing the mainstream trends, are some of the most popular among the Russian people, whereas the newspaper identified as the most critical towards the official views (*Novaya Gazeta*), is the least popular out of those reviewed. It is interesting that the two most popular news agencies, *Lenta* and *Ria Novosti* are also the ones most actively disseminating the official perspective. This allows us to conclude that there must be a causality between the Russian mainstream media coverage of the issues related to Georgia and the opinion of the Russian people regarding the intervention.

7.3. Can the expressions of securitization and manufacturing consent be identified in the mainstream Russian media coverage of the issues related to Georgia?

Now that the first two research questions have been answered, and it has been shown how the Russian media covered Georgia-related issues in 2008 before and during Russia's intervention in Georgia, as well as how this coverage contributed to the Russian public opinion on the intervention, the third research question can be answered to see how the media's impact on the Russian public opinion must have been achieved, i.e. whether the identified trends were designed

to securitize Georgia and manufacture consent of the Russian public towards the policies of the Russian government in relation to Georgia. In order to answer this question, the reviewed trends identified in the mainstream Russian media have to be measured against the theoretical frames underlying the study, i.e. securitization and manufacturing consent. Some trends are the expressions of both, manufacturing consent as well as securitization, and in this way, one aids to achieve the other, whereas some trends more explicitly fit in one of the analytical frames.

7.3.1. The meeting points between the mainstream media coverage trends and “manufacturing consent”

In order to manufacture the consent of the Russian public, the Russian mainstream media seems to resort to selection of topics, framing of issues, emphasis and choice of particular words and phrases for each side, voicing concerns and disseminating information from particular sources, in order to silence or reduce the alternative perspectives. Most of the trends presented in the findings chapter, to a certain extent fit in the expression of manufacturing consent, as the selection of topics and concentrating on certain issues, giving the priority to particular events over others, clearly meet the concept of manufacturing consent.

Focusing on the issues related to the Georgian army, and the opposition to the Georgian government, as well as foreign relations of Georgia especially its relation with NATO, while ignoring other important events related to the internal development of Georgia, are good examples of the selection of topics as the expression of manufacturing consent identified in the Russian mainstream media coverage. One of the most visible examples of choice of topics and filtering the information is expressed by covering the history of the separatist conflicts, when the media tries to disregard the information about the historical roles of the regions and their internationally recognized statuses as parts of Georgia, while instead highlighting the prospects of recognition of their independence. Pointing to the independence of Kosovo as a legal precedent, serves to prepare the public and manufactures their consent for the future recognition of the independence of the Georgian separatist regions. The preparation of the public to accept the above-mentioned recognition seems even more important if we take into consideration Russia's problems with separatism (Chechnya). Same can be said regarding the mainstream Russian media reliance of the particular sources of the information, mainly Russian officials, Ossetian and Abkhazian separatist leaders and representatives of the de-facto governments of the

separatists. Presenting interviews mainly with the Ossetian residents of the separatist regions, while ignoring the concerns of the Georgian residents, as well as presenting inflated numbers of casualties on the Ossetian side (worthy victims) designated as victims of ethnic cleansing, as opposed to the thousands of Georgian victims in Abkhazia in the 90s that are not mentioned despite the reiteration of the history of the conflicts of the 90s in the two separatist regions ó meet the concept of worthy-unworthy victims, as an obvious expression of manufacturing consent.

If we analyze the findings from the perspective of the filters presented by Herman and Chomsky that are indicators of manufacturing consent, we can contend that the fifth filter can be especially applicable to the Russian media. In the Russian reality, anti-Western, especially anti-American rhetoric may be regarded as one of the main reasons of actively disseminating the official anti-Western views by the media to stir anti-Western attitudes among the Russian population. Thus, presenting the prospect of Georgia's possible membership of NATO as a threat, can be viewed as the expression of anti-West and especially anti-American "religion" characteristic for the Russian reality, and the expression of manufacturing consent by the Russian media. Allegory to Kosovo's independence and regarding it as the reason to recognize the independence of Georgian separatist regions may also be viewed as the expression of manufacturing consent and attributed to the anti-Western "religion", since Kosovo's independence was recognized by a number of "Western" countries.

After analyzing some critical articles from the findings of the study, we can see that the Russian government is hardly criticized for the invasion of Georgia in the mainstream media. It was identified that a number of superficially critical articles, rather than reproaching Russian government for intervening in Georgia, express their concern for the high economic costs of the war, the late response, Medvedev's indecisiveness to intervene, using outdated weaponry, and the negative consequences of the war detrimental to the international image of Russia. The journalist who "complains" about the absence of "firm Russian course" in relation to Georgia, and criticizes Russia for failing to question the referendum held in Georgia deciding the entry of Georgia into NATO, does not pose the question whether Russia has the right to question the referendum held inside another sovereign country, or to interfere in its internal affairs. Another political scientist does not approve of military intervention, although not because it is against

international law, but because this will give Saakashvili the possibility to expose Russia as a participant of the conflict. Except for *Novaya Gazeta* and some articles in *Gazeta*, among which "the big brother complex" stands out, it is obvious that the majority of the Russian mainstream media does not challenge the official line of thinking, but rather, (DiMaggio's quote describing this trend applies very well to the Russian mainstream media coverage) "presupposes it, thus helping to establish it even more deeply as the very precondition of discussion, while also providing the appearance of a lively debate" (DiMaggio 2009:17). A good example of such a trend is also visible in the article where the journalist, despite considering "deferring the status" as a better option than "defining" it, thus giving the impression of having a view different from the official one, contends that Russian "peacekeepers", as the only source of maintaining peace in the region, should stay in Georgia. Furthermore, he thinks "pacifying the region" is the most beneficial option for Russia, and hence, it should be given a priority over the territorial integrity of Georgia. The conclusion drawn is that even though the journalist gives the impression of challenging the official perspective, he implicitly assumes that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the neighboring country, as well as the norms and principles of international law, are unimportant compared to what is beneficial to Russia. This is the pre-assumption from which the text develops, likely to cause the public to take it for granted that it is "not wrong" to ignore the international principle of territorial integrity and sovereignty of another country, if it is not a priority and beneficial for Russia to do so. Thus, mainstream Russian media criticize the Russian government mainly on superficial procedural issues (timing of intervention, economic costs, international image, etc.), rather than presenting the moral and foundational criticisms framing the intervention as illegal under international law. Interestingly, this type of "criticism" helps to reinforce the official views among the public. This trend can be considered as one of the main expressions of manufacturing consent of the Russian public towards the invasion of Georgia, use of excessive force and consequently, recognition of independence of the separatist regions, internationally recognized as Georgian territories.

7.3.2. The meeting points between the mainstream media coverage trends and securitization

The expressions of manufacturing consent presented above, must have aided to prepare the Russian public for the securitization during the period including several months before the

intervention. Choice of words, such as Russian "peacekeepers" versus Georgian "troops/soldiers", together with the focus on the coverage of military side of Georgian state also serves to securitize Georgia by means of underlining its military nature and presenting it as a military or some other type of threat to Russia. Highlighting that the Georgian army is ten times bigger than that of South Ossetia, would supposedly terrify laymen (especially those unaware of how small Georgia is compared to Russia by territory as well as by population), and cause them to perceive Georgia as a significant military threat to Russia. Portrayal of Georgian government as the abuser and discriminator against the people of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and disturber of the Russian "peacekeepers", accompanied by the repeated allusions to terrorism affiliated with Georgia, presents the image of the Georgian government and especially president Saakashvili as a great threat which has to be dealt with. This is a very clear expression of securitization, aggravated by depicting Georgian government as a threat for the image of Russia in the eyes of the international community, and highlighting Georgia's ties with USA as a threat to the security of Russia. Broad dissemination of the concerns of Russian officials about the negative consequences that are bound to follow Georgia's accession to NATO supposedly contributes to alarming Russian public, reinforcing their view of Georgia as a threat for the Russian state. In this case, i.e. attempting to securitize the relations of Georgia with USA and NATO, an existential threat is also posed to the ideology of Russia, to which Western norms and principles are detrimental.

The perceived threat of Georgia's aspiration towards NATO presented in the Russian media is only aggravated after framing the process as "Saakashvili is dashing into NATO." To determine which is the real perceived threat for Russia, the aspiration of Saakashvili's Georgia towards NATO or the alleged abuse of Russian citizens and peacekeepers (more vividly presented as an existential and immediate threat requiring urgent measures), is not the aim of this study. As Buzan (1998) points out, in order for the analyst to understand securitization, the task is not to assess some objective threats that "really" endanger the object; rather, we have to grasp the processes of constructing a shared understanding of what is regarded as a threat. The study reveals that the prospect of Georgia's membership of NATO was continuously presented as a threat to Russia, and in this case we are witnessing only a securitizing move, which obviously significantly aided the implementation of the urgent measures and hence successful

securitization of Georgia in August 2008, after presenting the mistreatment of Russian citizens and peacekeepers by Georgia as an existential threat to Russia.

By depicting Russia as the supporter of the ordinary residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the image of Georgia as a threat is only strengthened. All the above mentioned trends that express manufacturing consent, such as worthy and unworthy victims, allegory to Kosovo, presenting the separatist regions as victims of Georgia, ignoring the information about their historical place in the Georgian state and their internationally recognized statuses, or the role of Russia in fuelling the separatist conflicts, seem to logically lead to the purely and explicitly securitizing speech acts reiterated by Russian officials as well as political scientists and journalists about the necessity to undertake urgent forceful measures towards Georgia.

As regards the units of securitization, in the role of referent objects the Russian citizens (holders of Russian passports), residing on the territory of South Ossetia, can be viewed, as well as the Russian peacekeepers deployed on the separatist regions of Georgian territory, since according to Buzan (1998:22) armed forces can be presented in the role of referent objects.

As for functional actors, in our research, as we know, they are not clearly separated from the securitizing actors, but can include all those important members of elite who, in one way or the other, influence the Kremlin policies. Separatist leaders can also be viewed in this perspective, if we bear in mind that staying in power is important for them, and they have been also described as corrupt mercenaries by some alternative media. In order to achieve the acceptance of the securitizing moves, and in this fashion, legitimize the securitization, the securitizing speech acts made by Russian officials had to be widely covered, without much critical evaluation or alternative speech acts that denounce them. When actively disseminating the securitizing speeches made by the officials, the media, willingly or unwillingly, appear to serve as a tool used by securitizing actors, in this case the government and the officials, whereas by making the securitizing speeches the journalists themselves take up the role of securitizing actors. The securitizing speech acts presented the issue of dealing with Georgia as existential, so important that instead of exposing it to normal politics, that is, peaceful resolution of the conflict, it had to be dealt with decisively by top leaders - Putin, Medvedev and other high officials. The features of the speech acts included existential threat of mistreatment of Russian citizens and peacekeepers by Georgia, point of no return - the necessity to punish Georgia and stop the bloodshed,

and a possible way out of intervention of the Russian forces in Georgia. The recognition of the Georgian separatist regions by Russia can be regarded as the effect of the inter-unit relations, representing the last step of the process of securitization.

Thus, the answer to the third research question can be summarized and it can be concluded that the Russian mainstream media have served as a tool of the government to securitize Georgia and manufacture consent of the Russian public for the Russian intervention in Georgia in August 2008. The trends identified in the mainstream Russian media coverage meet the concepts of manufacturing consent and securitization, some being the expressions of both, while others more clearly meeting one of the concepts. It must be noted that the expressions of each concept (manufacturing consent and securitization) cannot always be easily separated from each other, as each in a way aids to achieve the other. However, all the trends identified in the media coverage during the months before the intervention, are more clear expressions of manufacturing consent, while at the same time serving to prepare the public for the acceptance of the securitizing moves preceding the intervention, and thus, are also expressions of securitization.

After comparing the different trends identified in the coverage of the Georgia-related issues in 2008 by Russian mainstream and alternative media, and answering the research questions, it is obvious that different media can portray completely different pictures of the reality, creating better and worse worlds in the minds of people. By creating different "situated" meanings and cultural models (Gee, 2001), such as "Russian peacekeepers" and "Georgian troops" in the human minds, the media can be held responsible for the drastically diverse viewpoints found in different groups of people. Thus, it may be contended that the Russian mainstream media coverage of Georgia-related issues and the war in 2008 to a considerable extent contributed to the opinions of Russian people about Georgian government and Georgian people as certain "kinds of people" involved in certain "kinds of activities".

Chapter eight: Conclusions and Recommendations

After the review and analysis of the findings of the study, it can be concluded that by serving as a tool for the Russian government to securitize Georgia, the mainstream Russian media attempted to manufacture consent of the Russian people to gather public support for the policies of the Russian government in relation to Georgia in 2008. Manufacturing consent of the Russian public was carried out by relying on particular sources of information, selection of topics, filtering of information and choice of words and phrases, favoring "worthy" victims over "unworthy" ones, and presenting seemingly critical perspective while at the same time pre-assuming the official perspective. The study confirms the assumption introduced by Herman and Chomsky (1988) and elaborated by DiMaggio (2009), that it is possible for some media to cover certain policies seemingly in a critical way, while at the same time presupposing the official view, leading the public to take it for granted without challenging it in terms of moral foundation or international law. In this way, superficially but not genuinely critical media in fact reinforces the official perspective in the minds of the people. The trends expressing manufacturing consent facilitated the portrayal of Georgia as a threat, and its securitization on the issues of international image and security, identity, military issues, and ideology of the state, with the results of intervention in Georgia and the recognition of its separatist regions. The support of the Russian public to a number of Russian policies in relation to Georgia as revealed by the Levada Centre polls can be explained by the Russian media coverage of the Georgia-related issues in 2008. The securitizers, i.e. Russian government, were "judged" first by Russian public, with the result of accepting their securitizing moves, aided by "manufacturing consent" provided by the Russian media, and the consequences of these actions have been studied by the analyst. It has also been concluded that the less popular alternative Russian media presented a drastically different image of Georgia by providing a contrasting coverage of the issues related to Georgia.

The recommendations of the study concern the importance of the role of the media especially in regard to guaranteeing the acceptance of certain government policies by the public. It may be suggested that more consideration be given to the media coverage of particular events, especially those regarding use of force and military intervention as urgent measures in order to avoid some designated threats. The study shows that it would be appropriate for the public to give more attention to the way media covers certain government policies. By giving deeper consideration to

the seemingly critical discussions disseminated by the media, as well as the overall role of media in the process of securitization of a country, people or government, the public acceptance of unjust policies and even the implementation of such policies by the government may be avoided. When the unjust policy concerns a military intervention, the role of media becomes even more crucial. It can be suggested that the public should take into consideration the alternative coverage of the events and delivery of different perspectives, as well as attempt to identify and compare different trends of covering the same issues. By giving more attention to the media coverage of the government policies, and the expressions of securitization and manufacturing consent in the coverage, it may be possible to avoid the public support for military intervention rather than peaceful resolution of a conflict. This recommendation may be especially useful if the media coverage during a relatively long period preceding the military intervention is given consideration, when there is sufficient time to challenge the trends of securitization and manufacturing consent identified in the mainstream media coverage.

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