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**Key messages in Georgia's EU integration discourse:
Critical Discourse Analysis perspectives on means-goal arguments**

Abstract

This paper is an attempt to identify strong statements of Georgia's President Mr. Giorgi Margvelashvili that contribute to expanding EU integration discourse within overall political discourse in Georgia. Powerfully structured messages and rich linguistic features influence the general setting and thus help to frame political attitude on Georgia's European integration. In addition, the paper examines practical argument in the selected, most recent institutional speech of President Margvelashvili. based on the scheme of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). I argue that even though the Georgian President is considered to be the strong supporter of the country's European orientation and pro-western focus, his particular speech delivered at the parliament of Georgia in spring 2017 lacks practical argumentation, has vague premises of implementation, describes related circumstances as a nearly impossible context to reach the objectives(at least in the near future).There is an absence of clear political vision as to which particular goals Georgia ought to be pursuing.

Key words: EU integration, Critical Discourse Analysis, Practical argumentation

1. Introduction

This paper aims to identify and highlight some of the key concepts that became part of the recent Georgian EU integration discourse. It provides modest analysis of the Georgian president's annual reports delivered at the Parliament of Georgia in order to find out how the President declares the country's western orientation and communicates perspectives on EU integration. The constitution of Georgia obliges the President to deliver a comprehensive speech /report bringing the county's most important issues to the attention of MPs, diplomatic corpus, cabinet ministers, Constitutional court and wider audience. Normally, the parliamentary report texts are carefully produced in advance; the

political leader's perception and concerns are well structured and well formulated. Thus, these texts are deliberative communication and provide a good source for seeking intended policies behind them.

The Current President of Georgia - Mr. Giorgi Margvelashvili was elected in October 2013, in the first round with 62.12 % of votes. Considered as the Pro-western politician, the annual reports of Mr. Margvelashvili contain strong messages on the need of Georgia's integration to the European institutions. In this paper I would like to identify some of the highlighted statements by President Giorgi Margvelashvili that, to my mind, contribute to expanding EU integration discourse within overall political discourse in Georgia. There are some powerfully structured messages that influence the general setting and thus help to frame political agenda.

It is safe to say that Georgia continuously demonstrates its commitment to be affiliated to the European statehood. 'The creation of the Office of the State minister of Georgia (in 2004) is the example of institutional efforts taken by the government of Georgia. The office was set to highlight the importance of EU integration and to accumulate all the efforts in this direction'¹. Besides a number of bilateral or multilateral agreements with the EU member states, there are several framework papers, strategic documents and action plans in place to support the cooperative relations between Georgia and the EU. In this regard, some of the most important recent achievements of Georgia are the following: The **EU - Georgian Association Agreement**²(on 27 June 2014, the Association Agreement was signed between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part). The document supports Georgia to deepen its political association and economic integration with the EU. On 1st of July 2016, EU-Georgia Association Agreement fully entered into force. The visa liberalization dialogue between the EU and Georgia was started on 4 June 2012. It is important to highlight, that since March 2017, Georgian citizens are able to travel to the Schengen zone countries with visa free regime.

2. Methodology

The analytical framework of the paper is that of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 2010) and particularly, the more recent version of CDA that gives primacy to **practical argumentation** and deliberation in political discourse (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012). 'Being of highly interdisciplinary

¹ The Office of the State minister of Georgia official web-page: <http://eu-nato.gov.ge/en/structure/history>

² Most of the official agreements with the EU and relevant documents can be found on Ministry of Foreign Affairs web-page www.mfa.gov.ge

character, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality' (Van Dijk 2001, 352).

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

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

Thinking of this scheme as one of the most relevant frameworks for analyzing set initiatives in political context, I will apply the above described structure in analyzing argumentative communication in President Giorgi Margvelashvili's parliamentary speeches.

Data for the analysis

Annual Parliamentary reports of President Giorgi Margvelashvili, delivered through various period of time: 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 are all available on the President's official web-page: www.president.gov.ge .Video material as well as script both in Georgian and English are easily accessible. This open access enables any interested person to get acquainted with the scripts / relevant video material without any limitations.

3. Key messages in the President's reports

Based on the content and linguistic analysis of President Margvelashvili's annual reports (2014,2015,2016,2017) one can easily assume that Giorgi Margvelashvili strongly supports Georgia's integration in the European institutions. In terms of rhetoric, he is a big defender of the pro-western foreign policy of the country. The annual report text of 2014 were conceptually titled as 'From a Post-Soviet country to a European State'. Furthermore, President Margvelashvili declares the entire year of 2016 as the year of Europe. Substantial portions of texts are dedicated to highlighting the need of Georgia's further affiliation to the European community. Below are some key messages that can be identified in almost all reports texts. These representations and concepts can be fairly generalized:

3.1 'Historical Argument of the Georgian Europeanness'

'The Georgian leadership has intermittently called for a 'return to Europe', a 'return to the European home' and a 'return to the European family' and even a very enigmatic 'return to the European Institutions' (Coene, 2016). The country's historical attachment to the European values is strongly highlighted in the reports of President Margvelashvili. It is safe to say that speeches of 2014, 2015, 2016 dedicate significant part of the text to the country's European adherence and common values. There are strong claims about Georgia being the part of Europe, not only at this stage of its development, but also historically:

'A Georgian is European with its individual cognition, is an organic part of the western civilization with its character (report text of 2014)'.

'I should stress that our Europeanism is not the result of conjuncture, but the natural decision taken by our nation many times through the history(report text of 2014)'.

'Even the ancient Greeks recognized us as a European nation(report text of 2014)'

'We are Europe historically as well as culturally, not only a part but also active participants of its development and creation through centuries; nevertheless, we may have much more contributed. Due to the geographical distance or certain separation, we had to defend the values frequently that are significantly important for the European civilization, though without allies, by ourselves (report text of 2015)'.

In this regard, the report text of 2016 is noteworthy - president Margvelashvili applies the technique of **naming distinguished historical persons** to emphasize long traditions of the country's commitment to the European values and integration:

‘Based on our free and historical choice, I announced 2016 as a year of European State. This is the continuation of the struggle carried out by our previous generations. Regarding this path, Noe Jordania stated ‘we are not afraid of future’, Zurab Zhvania was setting the goal ‘I am Georgian therefore I am European’. On this way, I do not see Georgia as a guest in the European family, but as a full-fledged member of this community’.

‘Considering ongoing global challenges in the region, we must realize that in modern reality unused opportunities mean regression. Due to the ways of Georgia's development, Iliia Chavchavadze, founding father of our historically European choice, stated – ‘Just stand a little while longer, you will turn into the stinking pool’. Therefore, in such difficult situation in the world as well as in the region, Georgia must take steps for its effective development’.

3.2 Strengthening positive attitude towards European integration, perceiving Georgian values equal to the European values;

One of the most often applied techniques of enhancing positive understanding on EU membership is using the word Europe (or European) synonymously to the concepts of freedom, development and democracy: ‘We offer you to live in the European, free, developed, democratic and peaceful state, which will be the guarantee of well-being, protection of ethnic, religious and cultural identity of its each citizen and the immunity of their political rights (report text of 2014)’.

In the text of 2016 report President Margvelashvili applies various linguistic means to persuade audience about the importance of EU integration. The report passages are thematically divided into sections touching upon significant topics, such as, how to sustain economic growth, develop tourism, support effective judiciary reforms, provide competitive environment for political parties. All the topics highlighted by the President are discussed in the realm of European integration either explicitly or supported by implicit references. Relevant European experience, opportunity or policy is provided as a supportive premise to the passages. According to the report text, any objective that Georgia aims to achieve in the above mentioned fields are reachable only through close cooperation with the European states and institutions. In this manner, I believe, president Margvelashvili dedicated the entire text of

the annual report 2016 to the European integration. Overall, the report texts of 2014, 2015, 2016 are strongly inspired by the willingness and commitment to be more integrated in the European community, to pursue a historical choice of the nation.

3.3 Linguistic markers

Among the linguistic markers applied by the speakers, I would like to highlight the use of intensifiers – as a means of strengthening legitimacy of the taken actions. While describing his recent campaign ‘Constitution for All’, the president takes the lead to represent people, to bring people’s voice to the parliament:

‘I promised them to represent their position here, today’.

‘Let us listen to the people! If we listen, it will become clear that the citizens’ **actual and urgent problems** remain unsolved, and we still have not managed to build a state in which no one lives in streets, no minors work in streets, no children live in extreme poverty, no elders have the feeling of despair and no one is hungry or cold.’

‘We have **alarmingly high rates** of child and maternal mortality’ (2016).

‘I deeply believe that we are standing on this (European integration) path today and this process is irreversible’ (2014).

Intensifiers are the most frequent linguistic markers while talking about Georgia’s historic and cultural linkage to Europe.

4. CDA analysis of the Parliamentary Report 2017

In March 2017, Georgia joined EU visa free policy, thus enabling Georgian citizens to travel most European countries (Schengen area member states) without visa. This exceptional success is the result of a long term communication with the EU institutions, fulfillment of the relevant reforms, well implementation of the VLAP – Visa Liberalization Action Plan. In 2015 the European Commission issued the last progress report on Georgia’s implementation of the VLAP. The European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Mr. Dimitris Avramopoulos emphasized: ‘The hard work of the Georgian authorities over the past three years towards achieving this important goal for the

benefit of Georgian citizens has given positive results. Now it is important to keep upholding all standards.’

Soon after this historical achievement, the annual parliamentary report of President Margvelashvili was scheduled (April 7, 2017). Considering the above described emphasis on the European integration in previous years’ speeches, it was most probably expected that the speaker would dedicate extensive passages to visa free travel to EU, with strong messages and call for further specific actions, however, this was not the case. Parliamentary report of 2017 was relatively small in size (overall it lasted for 30 minutes, while previous reports would last for at least 50 minutes) and contained modest argumentative passages on EU integration. Nevertheless, I would like to focus on one of the identified practical arguments related to Georgia’s European integration and analyze it based on the suggested CDA scheme by Norman and Isabela Fairclough.

‘Georgia’s declared and final destination is to return to its historical family of the European states. The same priority is reaffirmed by the ‘Resolution of the Parliament of Georgia on the Foreign Policy of Georgia’ adopted on December 29, last year. I applaud the spirit and aims of this resolution. Therefore, we have to start the active work to become the EU applicant country. For this aim, it is necessary to strengthen democracy and sustainability of state institutions, protect human rights, the rule of law, economic development and to create the efficient and functional European system of justice(report text 2017)’.

The speaker identifies a (to my mind quite ambitious)goal:‘ Georgia’s declared and final destination is to return to its historical family of the European states’. The value premise behind the goal is quite vivid and well established not only as part of the current report, but also, based on the previous report texts. Historical choice of the Georgian nation – to be more integrated in Europe - supports the goal as the basic value premise behind. With this goal in mind, the speaker claims for the following action: ‘we have to start the active work to become the EU applicant country’. As for the means –goal premise: ‘For this aim, it is necessary to strengthen democracy and sustainability of state institutions, protect human rights, the rule of law, economic development and to create the efficient and functional European system of justice’. According to the CDA analysis, circumstances are important premises for estimating the feasibility of means-goal arguments:

‘On the 1st of July last year, the Association Agreement including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area Agreement entered into force. Now we have a Visa-Free regime in Schengen zone. However, we should not stop on this achievement’.

Besides this passage, the speaker gives an extensive outline on the current situation in the country in many different directions: President Margvelashvili talks about the current judicial crisis, high concern about justice system, ‘recent tendency of expanding large business the expense of the merger of small business’ hampering small business development and leading to unemployment, troubles with the consumers’ rights, current problems related to media. The below passage could also serve as a good material for understanding circumstances and if they are relevant for achieving the set goal:

‘I recently launched a campaign ‘Constitution for All’, to involve Georgian society at large in discussions on constitutional values and to establish the basic principles of national consent. I hope, such discussions will further unite our society and the people's voice will be heard more actively. These meetings make it clear that our society has a lot of interesting views on the basic principles of the country arrangement. I would like to inform the Constitutional Commission members, that people need more democracy, not weakening but strengthening the self-governance; access to education and its quality enhancement; more elective positions and increasing their accountability; strengthening public control mechanisms. Society wants more involvement in the decision-making process and clearer social protection guarantees to be reflected in the Constitution.’

Table 1

Claim for action: ‘We have to start the active work to become the EU applicant country’

Goal: ‘Georgia’s declared and final destination is to return to its historical family of the European states’

The value: Historical choice of the Georgian nation – to be more integrated in Europe

Means – Goal premise:
to strengthen democracy and sustainability of state institutions, protect human rights, the rule of law, economic development and to create the efficient and functional European system of justice’

Circumstances:

EU- Georgia Association Agreement, including Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement in place;
Visa free policy with the EU in place;
Existing judicial crisis;
Expanded large business putting SME development at risk;
Problems in relation to media;
‘people need more democracy... Society wants more involvement in the decision-making process and clearer social protection guarantees to be reflected in the Constitution.

A careful look at the above given table and analysis of the presented practical argument displays that although the means-goal premises are in line with the claim for action, they are too general and, in some way, distant. Described circumstances clearly show that there are not sufficient resources/ readiness to implement the claim for action (Becoming an EU applicant country). First of all, considering the enlargement policy of the EU, related procedures, timeframe of negotiations and uphill's on the path towards the EU integration, the above claim for action, to my mind, is a bit unrealistic and poorly measured. In addition, the European Commission's position is the following: 'Any European country that respects the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law may apply to become a member of the EU'³ while describing current situation in Georgia and dedicating quite an extensive piece of the text to these circumstances, the President highlights the lack of the fundamental principles (minimum standards) required for applying to the EU membership. If the European framework documents, supportive mechanisms, written preconditions are in place (readiness declared from the EU side), and on the other hand, Georgia still faces fundamental challenges with relation to democracy, justice, human rights, media, which simply implies that **the country is unprepared for the EU accession negotiations**. To my mind, the speaker's claim for action contradicts to what he describes in circumstance premise. There is a complete absence of alternative courses of action and critical examination of such alternatives. This seems to correlate with an absence of clear political vision as to which particular goals Georgia ought to be pursuing and what means are, realistically, most likely to deliver a range of desirable goals.

³European Union Newsroom: http://europa.eu/newsroom/highlights/special-coverage/enlargement_en

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