The Three Points of a Circle: A Research Framework for Understanding Foreign Policy and Ideology Through Discourse

Maria Evropi Chatzitheodorou

University of St Andrews, United Kingdom

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ABSTRACT

This paper begins from the premise that a key element in comprehending the discipline of International Relations lies in the understanding of state behaviour. This constitutes the main objective of this paper, which focuses on the limited scope of examining one aspect of state behaviour, foreign policy. Foreign policy is examined through the interconnected lenses of ideology and discourse. The argument developed is that ideology sustains foreign policy through the provision of the foundational support that it requires for its perpetuation and through the creation of an overarching narrative that not only explains, but also justifies foreign policy choices. In this context, the concepts of state identity and interests are elevated as two fundamental elements of state behaviour, which are narratively procured via ideology and define the aims of foreign policy and the means of pursuing them. The paper makes clear that the ideological underpinnings of foreign policy require the crucial contribution of discourse as an intervening variable that allows for the narrative performance of identity and the pursuit of foreign policy ends, dictated by identity. Security is conceptualised and exemplified through discourse, with the latter becoming an indispensable element not only of foreign policy, but also of state survival.

1. Introduction

'The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.'

(Wittgenstein, 1961)

The complex world of International Relations requires the continuous re-evaluation and elevation of the tools, theories, and methodological approaches that have as a central aim the deep and holistic understanding of the relations that govern the international stage. Seeking to understand is a key characteristic of human behaviour and it comes as no surprise that it has been extended and applied to international politics as well, as they permeate our lives, even in ways difficult to conceptualise, and, therefore, not only attract, but also demand our attention.

In this context, mainstream and critical theories of International Relations alike have attempted to systematise the functions of the political arenas, the domestic as well as the international, and to provide guidelines, both descriptive and prescriptive, on how International Relations are

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performed and how this performance affects us, on the regional, national, and international levels. A crucial aspect of this analysis, as well as the core objective of this article, is the understanding of state behaviour. More specifically, this article will examine one function of state behaviour, foreign policy. Questions of who makes foreign policy decisions, how they reach them, how they enforce them, and how they manage their consequences have immediate consequences on the international arena.

This paper attempts to contribute to the understanding of the concept of foreign policy, especially foreign policy that promotes and leads to engagement in conflict. The focus here is the state, as the primary actor and unit of analysis. The agency of the state is examined closely since it is recognized as the primary foreign policy decision maker on the international stage. Adopting a critical constructivist stance on International Relations analysis, this paper contends that the explanatory variables for foreign policy making can be found in its close and inescapable relationship with discourse and ideology. The contribution of this paper, therefore, lies in the promotion of a theoretical framework that seeks to conceptualise foreign policy through the triptych of "discourse – ideology – foreign policy", to explain state behaviour, and particularly the involvement in conflict.

To crystallise the argument, the paper consists of three sections; the first section focuses on ideology. After briefly explaining the value and functions of ideology for the state, this section argues that the main role of ideology is to establish and perpetuate the identity of the state, one that the citizens will be able to understand and identify with. This helps the state construct and consolidate its own identity as well as utilise the executive power that derives from it. The second section moves on to examine how the state makes foreign policy choices, based on the established ideology and the identity that accompanies and sustains it. The connection here exists exactly because of identity and interests, two core elements of critical theories of IR, which form a necessary explanatory relationship between the nature of the state, its international interests, and the ways it sees fit to pursue them. The third section creates the link between ideology and the pursuit of foreign policy by introducing the crucial intervening variable of discourse; it argues that, through language, political leaders can perform speech acts and make securitizing moves, which then render foreign policy choices acceptable or unacceptable. The Copenhagen School of Securitization, thanks to its unique focus on discourse, is employed here as a tool to aid the connection between discourse, state ideology, and the pursuit of its foreign policy.

The paper, therefore, contributes to the understanding of how states make foreign policy choices, focusing on conflict, while creating a framework of analysis that combines the explanatory power of ideology (as an element of identity and as a way of power perpetuation for the state) and discourse (as an intervening variable of analysis). Throughout this paper, the main aim is to demonstrate the interconnectedness of the concepts that comprise the triptych (and the core argument), as described above and to showcase that ideology, foreign policy, and discourse, under this new light, cannot and should not be studied in isolation.
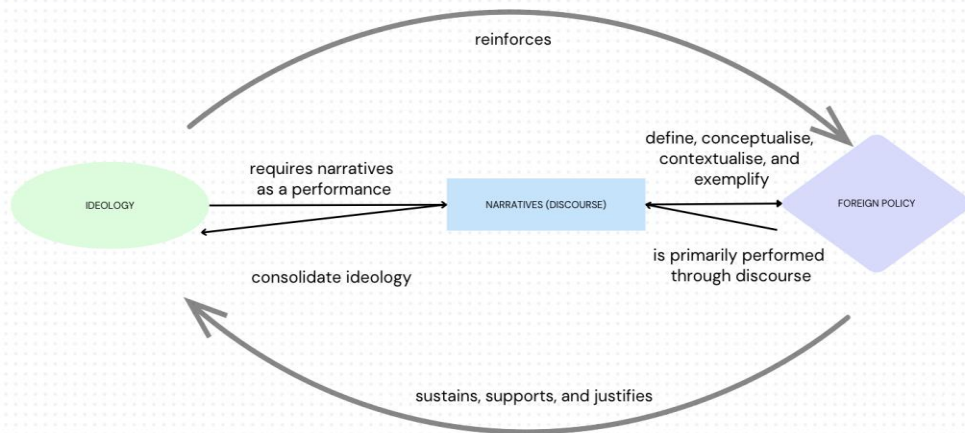
Figure 1: Schematic representation of the theoretical framework of the triptych consisting of ideology, narratives, and foreign policy and the relations between the three elements
Through this depiction the interconnectedness of the elements becomes clear. The main aim of justifying and explaining foreign policy choices, via the performative work of narratives, is facilitated by the functions of ideology, which not only adds to the performance of narratives, but also reinforces the strength of the national ideology. Discourse works towards the consolidation of the ideology and the foreign policy that is produced as a result.

2. Analysis

2.1. Ideology

Levi-Strauss' notion of culture, which he developed to ultimately argue that languages are the means through which people give meaning to experiences, has influenced Althusser in his search for what ideology is and in his understanding of how and why ideology is so pervasive in people's minds. Althusser understood ideology as a *representation* of the imaginary relationship of individuals (members of social classes in class societies) to their real conditions of existence (Althusser 1971, p. 162). From the get-go, the definition of ideology as a representation raises questions of who represents what, and to what end. The element of representation also brings to the fore issues of method; does the type/ structure/ content/ context of representation matter? If so, how? This simple definition has therefore managed to open the discussion on what the word 'representation' practically means, and what its repercussions are for the making of politics, and specifically, international politics. Besides the pivotal question of what it is, Althusser was interested in discovering the ways ideology can become so convincing. This raises the crucial variable of discourse, which will be analysed in due course.

The resilience of ideology, for Althusser, can be attributed to the means, or apparatuses, through which it is transmitted to the people, in a way that it ultimately becomes part of their subconscious. For this, he developed the concepts of Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) and Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), whose function he attributed to the State. While the RSAs are the core element of the State, relying mainly on violence, the ISAs are the ones that operate through ideology. Examples of these include but are not limited to the media, the family, the law, education, and the church. Their role is to promote ideology in a way that it

becomes so saturated in society that, ultimately, it renders itself essentially indiscernible from 'common sense'. The RSAs provide a shield, behind which the ISAs can operate and perpetuate the ideology of the ruling class (Althusser 1968).

The importance of this argument has been picked up by numerous researchers in contemporary International Relations, who have combined it with Gramsci's notion of hegemony, the success and efficiency of which 'depend on the capacity of dominant groups to suture their identities, interests, emotions, and values […] into a hegemonic vision and embed it in institutions and policies – leading in turn to its translation into 'good' common sense' (Gramsci 1971). For example, Wilhelmsen (2017), Stoddart (2007), and Jessop (2018) advance the argument that hegemonic power is constructed and performed to appear as common sense and is embedded in state policies. Fierke focuses on and develops Althusser's concept of interpellation, with which she refers to the 'process by which people, when 'hailed' by discourses, recognize themselves in that hailing' (2015, p. 90). In a similar vein, Jessop focuses on Althusser's concept of 'assujetissement' or 'subjectivisation of the people' which is the crucial ideological mechanism that turns the audience from listeners into subjects, rendering the ideology 'common-sense', thus 'degenerating its own ideological character' (2018, p. 38).

Ideology, here, is seen to perform a vital function. Thanks to the performative power of narratives, as will be demonstrated below, which is an indispensable element of its power, ideology reinforces foreign policy decisions. Based on the state identity, as it has been laid out in the foundations of the ideological underpinning of state power, and its prerequisite for the achievement of state interests, ideology functions as the 'roadmap' towards that achievement. It can explain the ends of foreign policy decision making. It has the power to justify the means to those ends. It can even consolidate foreign policy directions if that is seen to be serving the purpose of the state identity. Here, by 'serving the purpose', it is meant to 'perpetuate and consolidate'.

This mechanism of interdependence between ideology and its narrative representations is vital in understanding how the state instrumentalises ideology to establish its identity as the prevalent one in the minds of the people, in a way that perpetuates its values, justified the means of pursuing them, and embed them in the collective conscience of the people. The above serves as an attestation to the attention that has been drawn to the nature and functions of ideology and to the ways in which it is able to perform and perpetuate its enduring effect on the subjects of a state. The analysis now turns to the application of ideology, more concretely, on foreign policy making.

2.2. Foreign Policy

Lebow, in his *Cultural Theory of International Relations* (2010), has sought to answer a plethora of questions about state decision-making, involving the reasons why states sometimes make decisions that go against their rationally calculated material gains. He resorts to motives of pride, glory, and prestige (first picked up by Thucydides in his account of the Peloponnesian War) to explain what sometimes might seem like irrational state behaviour. To that end, he developed an explanatory link between identity, interests, and behaviour.

In this fluid, interdependent connection which is adaptable to change and highly responsive to external stimuli, such as the behaviour of other states or non-state actors on the international stage, it is significant to underline the fact that Lebow clearly understood that the dominant ideology of the state will necessarily and inescapably not only reflect on but also directly affect its identity and, by consequence, its perception of 'interests'.

Constructivist thought has long established identity as the foundation of interests, contending that the assumptions about who we are necessarily reflect on what we consider beneficial or harmful for our identity (Wendt 1992). In a similar vein, Lindemann maintains that 'actors' interests consist of shared ideas about identity and its associated norms' (2010, p. 31), something that can promote certain actions and exclude others as incompatible with the identity compass of the state. Furthermore, he examines the effects of a lack of recognition of a state's identity on its behaviour and he found that the effects can be severely damaging. Recognition, understood as an entirely symbolic good, is perceived as indispensable to states. In the face of a lack of recognition, states appear more willing to engage in violent practices, conflict, or even war, to demonstrate not only that they deserve said recognition, but also that recognition is a good worth fighting for.

Extending the argument further, Wolf contends that consistent patterns of disrespect bring about antagonistic identities (2011) which can have a damaging effect on a state's ability and/or willingness to cooperate and comply with international norms, as a consequence of a loss of incentive. The perceived disrespect that is associated with the lack of recognition can be traced back to the state's identity and adjacent ideology which present an image of the world and the state's role in it (Greenhill 2008). If the symbolic image of the state is not validated by external agents and if it does not incur appropriate behaviours, the ideology of the state that brought forth this expression of identity starts to lose its strength and validity. To endure this injustice, the ideology, depending on the level of preparedness, may propose specific courses of action to remedy the perceived injustice, which, usually, involve the engagement in conflict.

Consequently, it becomes clear that ideology, thanks to its embeddedness into the identity (and identity narratives) of a state cannot but affect its foreign policy direction and choices. A key point to highlight is the fact that *how* this happens matters; the narratives that are used to project an ideology as the dominant one, to promote and defend the state's interests on the international stage, and to justify the foreign policy choices that the ideology entails are a pivotal element in this procedure. This element is facilitated by discourse.

2.3. Discourse

'Without discourse there is no social reality' (Philips & Hardy 2002, p. 2). Discourse is highlighted in this paper as an essential and indispensable element of the triptych that sets out to explain foreign policy and to facilitate the discipline of foreign policy analysis. Fierke, having explored identity in depth, has reached the conclusion that identities are inseparable from the discursive narrative constructions that invent, instantiate, and sustain them. 'The stories we tell and hear from others are the vehicle human beings use to render the world and our role in it more comprehensible' (2015, p. 84). This comes as no surprise since the importance of language as a medium of human communication has been conceptualised by many. What is new here is the development of the framework that places language at the fore of foreign policy analysis, not as a secondary explanatory factor, but as a building block. Hence, the focus of this paper has been the effects of discourse on foreign policy. Guillaume conceives 'identities as narratively performed' and characterises them as 'social and narrative events' (2018, p. 31). For him, the narrative construction of an identity delineates its symbolic boundaries as well as its material boundaries. As seen above, identities come with a proposed set of actions, a course that is prescribed as optimal to achieve the desired aims. But they also come with some actions that are put beyond the pale of acceptable activity. These are the boundaries of an identity, and the limits of its capabilities. Köhler (2019) takes this argument one step further by supporting the premise that discourse constitutes not only identity, but also political action itself.

Under careful investigation, it becomes evident that the language used in political discourse is aimed to elicit emotions from the audience. The stronger the affective reaction, the stronger the element of dominance of the identity (and ideology) that is exercised on the audience in that particular moment and context. As soon as the discourse elicits an emotional reaction from the audience, it engages it in a process of 'subjectivisation' (as described above), as the discourse acquires elements of 'myth'. The concept of the political myth is defined by Flood as 'an ideologically marked narrative which purports to give a true account of a set of past, present, or predicted political events and which is accepted as valid in its essentials by a social group' (Flood 1996, p. 44). Charteris – Black utilises this definition to focus on the fact that political myths rely on emotions to gain public support and become widely understood and accepted (2011). This definition of political myth can be linked to Bruner's definition of a narrative, which he perceives as 'a *version* of reality whose acceptability is governed by convention and 'narrative necessity' rather than by empirical verification and logical requiredness' (1991, p. 4 emphasis added). The conceptualization of narratives as versions of reality or events corresponds to their main function in political discourse; to enhance the argument that the speaker is making, irrespective of objective judgements. Emotional reactions from the audience mean that the judgement will be subjective and highly dependent on the performative power of the narrative itself.

For Köhler, the 'identity construction' purpose of discursive narratives, as seen above, depends on a relational process where the collectively shared image of the Self is constituted against the image of the Other (2019, p. 58). The 'representation of radical Otherness' (Wilhelmsen 2017, p. 167) is a crucial role that discourse performs in the process of foreign policy making. The construction of a divisive dichotomy has been shown to serve the interest of enforcing the identity and its prescribed course of action to the audience, while constructing an enemy, something radically different than 'us' that inspires fear and calls for action. A plethora of literature has been dedicated to the Self v Other dichotomy in International Relations. Lazar & Lazar have contended that 'enunciating the enemy is pivotal in defining, establishing, and maintaining a moral order, for the enemy is the one who violates our values' (2004, p. 227). They coined the term '(e)vilification of the enemy' to describe the process of narrative formation that systematically criminalises the Other and uses its actions as evidence of a ruthless enemy that threatens the core of the Self's existence.

Mouffe argues that politics has always been about the construction of an 'us against them' narrative because the construction of the Self depends firmly on it (1999). In order to exist, the Self requires an Other, to delineate its boundaries and challenge it to action. Martin sees the world itself as constituted through discourses and, as a result, as a performatively and discursively executed fantasy construction. The Self, for him, is defined through the Other, simply because 'what we are as political subjects is dependent upon what we identify as a limit to our being' (2002, p. 138). This construction of the Self through the Other has as a desired result the coiling of the conflicting identities of the audience under the 'auspices' of the dominant identity of the state. If this happens, Ross purports, the state can create an 'imagined community' that links personal and collective identities, 'through a shared, and usually exaggerated, conception of the differences between one's group and the outsiders' (2001, p. 162). Moreover, this implies the possibility of the creation of a 'chosen trauma', a discourse on a specific experience that symbolises the group's deepest threats and fears.

This concludes the brief analysis of the role of discourse both in identity formation and in foreign policy making and it has been shown that 'the issue of identity is inseparable from security, as foreign policy is understood as a discourse of danger and fear than constitutes the Self' (Köhler 2019, p. 60).

2.4. Synthesis

The paper now turns to an examination of the connection between discourse, the ideology of the state, and the pursuit of its foreign policy goals (Ratuva 2019). In *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, first published in 1998, Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde place their analytical focus on the construction of threat, setting the foundations of the Copenhagen School of Securitisation. Conceptualising security as primarily intersubjective, socially constructed, and context dependent, they argue that the best way to study it is through discourse. Their concept of securitisation is heavily dependent on the concept of a 'securitizing move', defined as 'a discourse that takes the form of presenting a referent object as an existential threat to an audience (1998, p. 25). The issue is, then, successfully securitized *only* if the audience accepts it as an existential threat and 'brings it into being as a security situation' (Williams 2003). The consent of the audience is key exactly because of the intersubjective nature of 'security' (Côté 2016). The concept can mean different things to different audiences and in different times, so the legitimization, authorization, or at least the tolerance of the audience is vital. A successful securitisation comprises of three components:

a. An existential threat: This entails the conscious choice, made by a securitizing actor with access to the relevant audience, to discursively perform an act that would portray an object (*any* object) as an existential threat to the survival and the identity of the state. This entails rigorous and continuous discourse on the danger that this object poses (see above the (e)vilification of the enemy by Lazar & Lazar) and the depiction of this danger as immediate and dire. Oren & Solomon (2015) focus on the value of repetition as a tool in the hands of the speakers to establish the message in the minds of their audiences. Honneth contends that the securitizing actor needs to show or design 'perceptible grounds' that the identity of the Self is being threatened at its existential level, if they want to produce an enduring threat narrative (1996, p. 34).

b. Emergency actions: The creation of an existential threat, painted in bleak colours can only mean that the state needs to defend itself. The agent that performs the securitizing move aspires to be the one to free the state of this existential threat, by assuming emergency powers, beyond the pale of normal politics. These powers would not be considered under normal circumstances, hence the need to portray the threat as existential (Broecker 2002). One example of these extraordinary powers is the power to make a decision for engagement in conflict or war. Hodges explains that discourse on securitisation can be an invaluable tool for decision makers who wish to justify their plans to involve the state in conflict (2018). As discourse is ultimately responsible for determining what is acceptable or unacceptable as a course of action, it is deemed indispensable in the process of turning something that is usually unacceptable (war) into acceptable.

c. Effects on interunit relations by breaking free of rules: The extraordinary measures described above necessarily will reflect on the relationship of the decision makers and their audiences, the governors and the governed. Since these measures would not have been considered in conditions of normal politics, their acceptance necessarily has repercussions for the balance of power within the state. Broecker uses the notion of 'hegemonic discourse formations' to describe the relationship between security discourses and the consequences this carries for the meaning fixed within them, which necessarily changes in the event of a successful securitizing move (2022), which sets a precedent in the public political discourse of the state and enhances the ideology of the securitising actors.

Stritzel (2007) would add to the above conditions for the success of a securitizing move the performative force of articulated threat texts, the positional power of actors who can influence the process of defining meaning, and the embeddedness of the texts in existing discourses. Jowett & O'Donnell (2019) explain that the latter element is necessary due to the need of the audience to feel that the discourse that it is presented with resonates with its core values. For that, political actors utilise 'anchors', already existing beliefs in the minds of the audience, that are considered as common sense, to build upon and construct their version of threat. Rychnovska utilises the concept of 'frames' to support the argument that acts of securitisation support one aspect of reality over the other, and are, thus, context dependent (2014). She defines frames as 'conceptual structures or sets of beliefs that organise political thought, policies, and discourse' and she imagines framing as an active phenomenon, dependent on agency. Anchors are also crucial in the process of frame resonance, the acceptance of the credibility of the frame and its linking with other, broader cultural narratives. Clement, Lindemann & Sangar examine the techniques that political leaders use to gain the approval of their securitisation acts by their audiences. To do so, they are known to mobilise community bonds by using specific emotional vocabularies that strengthen internal cohesion and identity (2017), which necessarily incurs the strengthening of the foundational ideology that sustains the ideology of the state.

Waever has argued that 'something is a security problem when the elites declare it to be' (1995, p. 54). This brings to the attention issues of agency, of who is capable of performing successful securitisation acts and to what end. The purposes of the elites imply that sometimes context is being used for self-serving ends. The importance of context has not gone unnoticed by Balzacq (2005 and 2010) who states that securitisation and discourse do not occur in a vacuum. Consequently, to capture the meaning of any discourse, it is necessary to situate it both socially and historically. Hence, the focus lies on the historically enduring and continuous patterns that identities follow throughout the years, thanks to the resilience of the ideology that sustains them and the concentrated efforts of discursive performances. Therefore, foreign policy choices do not occur in a vacuum either, rather, they depend on historical understandings, *post hoc* explanations, ideological constraints, identity management strategies and discursive practices.

As seen above, the construction of threat is crucial for the construction and definition of the Self. Therefore, as Köhler claims, securitisation is largely a discourse on identity (2019). The narratives about the Self are intrinsically tied to narratives about what constitutes a threat. This essentially self-reflecting process of understanding and conceptualising threat is ontologically interlinked with the narratives that sustain the identity of the state, through discourse.

2.5. Application

This framework can be better understood and illuminated when applied to a case study, which can enhance the validity of the theoretical approach outlined above. The case study of the Russian Federation under the presidency of Vladimir Putin provides fertile ground for this endeavour. This is by no means an exhaustive application of the framework, as it cannot cover the entire Putin presidency due to the lack of appropriate space. However, it is within the scope of this article to briefly demonstrate how this framework can be utilised to explain the foreign policy choices of the Putin presidency and how it can be helpful in the West, for a more coherent understanding of seemingly incomprehensible foreign policy decisions.

The ideological element of the Putin presidency was made clear since his first year in office. The priorities of the state, the definition and redefinition of its identity and its adjacent interests were explicitly declared in various occasions, and the official rhetoric of the regime was very clear in the definition of its main goals: sovereignty, independence, multipolarity. The concept

of sovereign democracy has had clear primacy in the ideology of the state under Putin, who has used all opportunities available to stress the importance of the term, which is seen as an opportunity for Russia to develop on par with the rest of the world in terms of financial and social development, but without the criticism and oversight of the West in the process. Putin has been vocal in expressing the desire to create a democratic state, comparable to the rest of the Western democracies. But he has been equally vocal in his rejection of Western criticism on how he attempts such a colossal task. His discourse on 'double standards' has been a frequent pattern in his speeches, aiming to deter foreign powers from passing criticism on the ways democracy is achieved in Russia (Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy, 2007).

The theme of independence is very closely related to the above, as Russia is seen as a Great Power, thanks to its past, present, and its bright future, and it should be allowed to pursue domestic and foreign policy as it sees fit. Independence to conduct policy is seen as a crucial factor for a power that does not rely on anyone else for advice, guidance, support, or financing. The foreign policy goals of Russia, in particular, are set by Russians, for Russians, and should be pursued anywhere in the world, without the hegemonic oversight of any other state. Finally, Russian state identity sees Russia belonging in a multipolar world, with no hegemon dictating policies to the 'smaller', inferior countries. The first consequence of this is the fact that foreign policy decisions should be made autonomously, tying back to the concept of independence. The second consequence of this is that, unavoidably, there will be some 'international' problems, which will require concerted efforts to be resolved or tackled. The greatest of these problems, for Russia, is global terrorism (Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, 2004). Problems such as this should be resolved on the international, multipolar level, without any 'leaders' and 'followers', with decisions being made among equal states. This is why Russian state identity promotes decisions made in the context of the United Nations and its organs and rejects regional and hegemonic organisations such as NATO (Speech at the Session of the UN Security Council, 2005 and Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, 2004).

This concrete ideological foundation that clearly defines the identity of the Russian state under Putin is reflected in foreign policy choices. Russia has repeatedly condemned the actions and decisions of NATO that attempt to incur in its zones of interest. Russia has repeatedly promoted UN resolutions that demonstrate concerted efforts of resolving issues on the international stage. Russia has repeatedly attempted to create forums of regional cooperation, such as the Commonwealth of Independent States, to demonstrate the independence of its foreign policy directions. Russia has rejected countless times criticism passed on its domestic affairs, citing 'double standards' in the rhetoric of the West. One example is the example of election oversight. The West was more than eager to provide election oversight in Afghanistan and Iraq, Russia claims, but when it suggested to provide oversight in the first elections in Chechnya, the West accused Russia of election interference (Press Conference with Russian and Foreign Media, 2004).

None of the above would have been successful in its implementation if it had not been accompanied by the right narratives, the performative effects of which have gained the internal support for the presidency's foreign policy choices. In the terms used by the Copenhagen School of Securitisation, interference in Russian affairs by the West and the corruption of true Russian identity have been framed by the regime as the true existential threat, looming over the people of Russia. The emergency actions assumed by the presidency have been, of course, the decisions made without enough, if any, consultation, regarding the foreign policy directions of the state and the decisions to engage in conflict. It is beyond the scope of this article to examine the conflicts that Russia has been engaging in since 1999, but it can be inferred that

the rationale behind the decision to do so has been to consolidate the independence of the state, the independence in foreign policy making, and the independent nature of Russian identity. As mentioned above, these measures would not have been considered in conditions of normal politics if the West had not been threatening the existence and free development of Russia. Consequently, their acceptance necessarily has repercussions for the balance of power within the state. It is impossible to calculate how these repercussions will develop in the future, but for now, it remains clear that the decisions made by the Putin presidency have altered the way the people view the institution, the state it represents, and the people that occupy the offices.

3. Conclusion

This paper has aims to contribute to the understanding of foreign policy and the strengthening of the value of discourse as an analytical tool for International Relations. To that end, it has introduced a triptych aimed at shedding light on the ways decision-making takes place and on the factors that influence it.

The first element, ideology, has been shown to affect the identity of the state to a great degree and to possess the ability to embed itself in the minds of the audience, thus appearing common-sense. The second element of foreign policy is conceptualised in a way that traces how decisions are being made, according to the criteria set by the state identity, and to the ends defined by its hierarchized interests. Lastly, the third element of discourse has been shown to permeate both the others, as it narratively constructs discursive representations of the Self, the Other, and what is considered as existentially threatening to the core of the state identity. The connection of the three elements has been crystallised and it has helped reach the conclusion that foreign policy choices cannot be examined, let alone understood fully, without the analytical power that discourse analysis has to offer. Used in the framework outlined above, it can function as a catalyst for a more holistic understanding of International Relations in general, and foreign policy in particular, in a conscious effort to stray away from mainstream explanations of International Relations that do not take into sufficient account the power of language and narratives.

'Powerful discourses constitute what they speak of' (Onuf 1989). This thesis has taken this premise into account and has attempted to create a framework where it is taken seriously, in the sense that the focal point of foreign policy analysis becomes the discursive constructions that position the Self and the Other in the social world. The Copenhagen School of Securitisation has been used as a practical example of how the synthesis of the three elements of the triptych can result in a framework that can withstand the pressure of International Relations and that can provide answers to questions of identity, threat, and narrative construction, all affecting foreign policy formation.

Bringing age-old questions and years-old theories into the 21st century, with the challenges and traps that this entails is a tricky, but required task. Understanding modern problems with old mindsets is insufficient and what is necessary is a bold move that will give suitable answers to the new challenges, but that will also signal the resilience and adaptability of International Relations research.

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Declaration of Interest Statement

The author reports there are no competing interests to declare.

Biographical Note

Maria Evropi Chatzitheodorou is a PhD candidate at the University of St Andrews, Scotland. Her thesis focuses on issues of discourse analysis, conflict analysis, and the region of the Caucasus. She works with critical theories of International Relations.

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