Faculty of Social Sciences
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EXOTIC BROTHERHOODS:

GEOPOLITICAL KNOWLEDGE(S) AND THE CAUCASUS IN POLISH AND SERBIAN MEDIA

Justyna Maria Pierzyńska

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the creation of geopolitical knowledge in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). In particular, it focuses on the discourses of international brotherhood and friendship and the emergence of often unexpected ideas of ”geopolitical closeness” between nations in this region. To analyze brotherhood discourses, the dissertation zooms in on ways in which the region of the Caucasus is incorporated into Polish and Serbian readings of both countries' geopolitical position, historical memory and their self-understanding as actors in the world of states. The five articles comprising the thesis discuss the Polish-Georgian, Serbian-Armenian, Serbian-Ossetian and Serbian-Abkhazian ”friendships”, tracing their rationales and ideational components. Special attention is paid to the role of a third actor – Russia and the Russians – in relation to which the analysed brotherhoods take on clear political vectors (pro- and anti-Russian).

Although the thesis touches on the high-brow foreign policy understandings of the Caucasus in Poland and Serbia, its main focus is set on the media and popular realms. With this in mind, I trace mundane discourses within which various notions of the Caucasus and "knowledges" about it emerge. Due to the popular focus, the bulk of the analysed material is drawn from the internet: it includes newspapers articles, TV programmes and interviews; users' comments and Youtube videos; the rest of the material is drawn from regular newspapers, books and interviews made on-site in Poland and Serbia.

Critical geopolitics, a sub-discpiline of political geography interested in the operations of geopolitical knowledge and power on various levels in contemporary societies, combined with the sociology of knowledge perspectives on discourse studies are two main theoretical lenses that inform this thesis as a whole. Additionally, in individual articles I utilize insights and concepts from other strands of discourse studies, memory studies, history and its work on historical representation. I apply all these perspectives to the problem of brotherhood discourses connecting Poles and Serbs with selected Caucasian nations with the hope to contribute to discourse-oriented research of geopolitics in Central and Eastern Europe.

The articles of this thesis argue for a deeper engagement with geopolitical imaginations formed at the intersection of the most mundane levels of audience interventions (e.g. user-generated content) and expert commentariat active in the media realm. A careful tracing of the circulation of geopolitical imaginations enables a better understanding of the process of formation of brotherhood discourses that feed on a dynamic exchange between elite and popular interpretations of national history, ethnicity and geopolitics.

Another argument advanced in this thesis is the usefullness of online comments as a source for critical geopolitical analyses, especially those

interested in the actual formation of knowledge claims within geopolitical narratives. Although online comments have nowadays been ”forgotten” in favour of social media analyses, they represent one of the clearest sources for understanding the actual unfolding of geopolitical arguments in real time. Moreover, comments are much less regulated and policed than social media presences, which nowadays are almost never anonymous; that enables access to uncensored and unmoderated, actual users’ views.

Central to this dissertation is also the attention given to analogy as tool of knowledge formation. My analysis suggests that the power of historical and geographical analogies in geopolitical discourses is key to forming ideas on international brotherhood, friendship and connections. Re-discovering the potential of analogies on various levels of geopolitical agency helps understand the power of not only intellectual, but also emotional attachments between nations that appear ”exotic” on first examination.

Finally, the thesis points to the need to shift the research focus from discursive operations of ”othering” and enmity, which have formed the core of discourse research interested in nation- and geopolitics-related issues in CEE, to ”brothering” and friendship, which has so far been neglected. By doing this, I hope to open a discussion about the role that the ideas of brotherhood between nations have in shaping people’s ideas on geopolitics in general, challenging or accepting official foreign policy narratives, creating knowledge about other nations and positioning oneself towards them.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tämä väitöskirja tutkii geopoliittisen tiedon tuottamista Keski- ja Itä-Euroopassa. Se tarkastelee etenkin kansainvälisen veljeyden ja ystävyyden diskursseja ja eri maiden "geopoliittiseen läheisyyteen" liittyvien – usein yllättäviltäkin tuntuvien – ajatusten esiin nostamista Puolassa ja Serbiassa. Väitöskirja analysoi ennen muuta Kaukasuksen alueeseen ja tapahtumiin liittyviä ”veljeysdiskursseja”. Näitä diskursseja käytetään Puolassa ja Serbiassa heijastuspintoina, joiden avulla peilataan geopoliittista asemaa, historiamuistia ja omakuvaa suhteessa muihin maihin.

Väitöskirja koostuu viidestä tapaustutkimuksesta, jotka on julkaistu akateemisina artikkeleina. Ne esittelevät Puolan ja Georgian, Serbian ja Armenian, Serbian ja Ossetian sekä Serbian ja Abhasian välisiä veljeysdiskursseja ja analysoivat näiden diskurssien taustalta löytyviä ajatusmalleja ja tietorakennelmia. Erityistä huomiota analyyseissa kiinnitetään kolmannen osapuolen eli Venäjän rooliin diskursseissa, koska venäjämyönteisyys tai -vastaisuus rakentaa veljeysdiskursseille usein selkeät poliittiset suuntaviivat.

Älymystön ja eliitin ulkopoliittisten näkemysten sijaan väitöskirjan pääfokus on median ja tavallisen kansan veljeysdiskursseille antamissa merkityksissä. Väitöskirjassa selvitetään etenkin arkipäivän diskursseja, joissa erilaiset mielikuvat ja "tieto" Kaukasuksesta muodostuvat. Suuri osa tutkimuksen aineistosta koostuu sähköisestä mediasta kerätystä materiaalista, kuten lehtiartikkeleista, televisio-ohjelmista ja -haastatteluista, käyttäjäkommenteista ja youtube-videoista. Muu materiaali on kerätty sanomalehdistä, kirjoista ja paikan päällä Puolassa ja Serbiassa tehdyistä haastatteluista.

Tutkimuksen pääasiallisen teoreettisen viitekehyksen muodostavat kriittinen geopolitiikka (critical geopolitics) ja tiedon sosiologia (sociology of knowledge). Kriittinen geopolitiikka on poliittisen maantieteen alalaji, joka on kiinnostunut geopoliittisen tiedon ja vallan roolista nykypäivän yhteiskunnissa. Molemmat näkökulmat kytkeytyvät väitöskirjassa diskurssitutkimuksen perinteeseen. Lisäksi eri osatutkimuksissa hyödynnetään myös muistiin ja muistamiseen liittyvän tutkimusalan (memory studies) sekä historiatieteiden käsitteitä. Edellä mainittujen näkökulmien monitieteinen yhdistäminen tuottaa tuoreen kontribuution geopoliittisten diskurssien tutkimukseen Keski- ja Itä-Euroopassa.

Veljeysdiskurssit muodostuvat ”eliitin” ja ”rahvaan” tulkintojen dynaamisessa vuorovaikutuksessa, jossa neuvotellaan kansakunnan historian, etnisyyden ja geopolitiikan merkityksistä. Väitöskirjan osatutkimukset osoittavat, että tarvitsemme syvempää perehtymistä arkipäivän yleisöosallistumisen ja asiantuntijoiden mediakommenttien kohtaamisiin ja niiden vaikutuksiin geopoliittisten mielikuvien syntymisessä ja

vahvistumisessa. Geopoliittisten mielikuvien ”kiertokulun” tarkempi jäljittäminen auttaa ymmärtämään kansakuntiin liittyvien kertomusten rakentumista ja leviämistä myös laajemmin.

Väitöskirja osoittaa myös internetkommenttien käyttökelpoisuuden kriittisen geopoliittisen analyysin lähdemateriaalina. Kommenttiaineisto auttaa selvittämään erityisesti sitä, kuinka laajalti jaettujen geopoliittisten narratiivien “tietoon liittyvät väittämät” (knowledge claims) rakentuvat arkisen mediakäytön kautta. Internetin kommenttipalstat on miltei unohdettu tutkimusmateriaalina, koska sosiaalinen media vie suurimman huomion myös tutkimuksessa. Kommenttipalstat muodostavat kuitenkin erinomaisen aineistopakin, jonka avulla voi seurata geopoliittisen argumentoinnin muotoutumista lähes reaaliajassa. Tämän lisäksi kommenttipalstoilla on yleensä vähemmän sääntelyä ja moderointia kuin suurilla sosiaalisen median alustoilla, jotka nykyään ovat harvoin anonyymeja. Kommenttipalstat tuottavat näin ollen analyysin kohteiksi vain nimeksi sensuroituja ja suodatettuja mielipiteitä.

Yksi väitöskirjan keskeisistä tuloksista on osoittaa analogioiden merkitys geopoliittisen tiedon muodostamisen keinona. Väitöskirjan analyysi todistaa, että historialliset ja maantieteelliset analogiat ovat geopoliittisissa diskursseissa avainasemassa. Niiden avulla rakennetaan ideoita kansainvälisestä veljeydestä, ystävyydestä ja muista yhteyksistä. Geopoliittisten toimijoiden käyttämien analogioiden näkyväksi tekeminen auttaa ymmärtämään sekä järkeen että tunteisiin pohjautuvia siteitä kansakuntien välillä, vaikka tällaiset siteet voivat ensi silmäyksellä näyttää yllättäviltä tai "eksoottisilta".

Lopuksi, väitöskirja osoittaa tarpeen siirtää tutkimustyön huomiota toiseuttavista ja viholliskuvia rakentavista diskursseista myös "veljeyttämisen" ja ystävyyden diskurssien tutkimiseen. Ensin mainitut kielteiset diskurssit ovat hallinneet valtio- ja geopoliittista tutkimusta Keski- ja Itä-Euroopassa, ja jälkimmäiset on tähän saakka pitkälti sivuutettu. Käsillä oleva väitöskirja avaa näin ollen keskustelun siitä roolista, joka kansojen välisen veljeyden ideoilla on ollut tiedon tuottamisessa muista kansoista, oman kansakunnan asemoimisessa suhteessa muihin kansoihin, geopoliittisen ajattelun yleisessä rakentumisessa sekä virallisten ulkopolitiikan narratiivien kyseenalaistamisessa ja hyväksymisessä.

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To sum up, these are deeds (...) which (...) make me wondrously honour the reply of that young soldier when Cyrus inquired of him how much he would take for a horse which had enabled him to win the prize in the races: "Would he sell it for a kingdom? " "– No, indeed, Sire; but I would willingly give it away to gain a friend, if I could find a man worthy of such an alliance".

Michel de Montaigne, *On Friendship*, 1580/2004, p. 16

LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

This thesis is based on the following publications:

I Brothers in Arms – Imagining a Meta-Historical Brotherhood of Georgia and Poland in Polish Media and Political Discourse, *Journal for Discourse Studies (Zeitschrift für Diskursforschung)* 2, 2016, pp. 178-190.

II New History – the new ways of knowing and remembering the Caucasus in Poland, *Central and Eastern European Review* 10, 2016, pp. 2-40.

III "Exotic brotherhoods" in Serbian media discourses: the Caucasus, In Carpentier N. et al. (Eds.), *Present Scenarios of Media Production and Engagement,* 2017, Milano: edition lumiére, pp. 151-162.

IV "With a little help from new friends"?: ideas of international brotherhood in post-Communist contexts, *Europe-Asia Studies* 72 (9), 2020, pp. 1554-1576. DOI: 10.1080/09668136.2020.1812536

V "It is Krajina all over again": geopolitics of spite and online comments in a Serbian newspaper, *Territory, Politics, Governance*, 2021, E-pub ahead of print. DOI: 10.1080/21622671.2021.1936146

The publications are referred to in the text by their roman numerals.

1 INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is a result of a sequence of astonishments I experienced in the autumn of 2008, when my hitherto "niche" interest in the Caucasus region and the Georgian language suddenly became a valuable asset in conversations with my friends and acquaintances in Poland. What was before perceived as an exotic and "useless" hobby of mine became a source of intensified interactions and conversations in the aftermath of the Russo–Georgian war of August 2008.

The Polish foreign policy reaction to the war was unexpectedly strong, with many high state officials, including the Polish president, travelling to Tbilisi in the midst of the war, holding speeches there, and generally participating in various demonstrations organized by the Georgian authorities.

Unexpectedly for me, this foreign policy reaction very quickly translated into an all-encompassing popular mobilization of Polish society. Georgia-themed events, concerts, meetings, and books started to appear in numbers unseen earlier. Before my eyes, Georgia – and to a certain extent the whole Caucasus as a geopolitical region – became a topic widely discussed in the media: newspapers, blogs, and online discussion boards were full of Caucasus-related conversations.

After the war, Georgia's popularity did not diminish. On the contrary, the country became a popular tourist destination, with regular cheap airline flights established and package holidays offered on the Black Sea coast; Georgian restaurants started to emerge and Georgian cuisine, virtually unknown before, has been since gaining the legendary status it had enjoyed before in the post-Soviet sphere only. Georgia-themed film festivals became regular, travelogue books fill the shelves of bookshops, and many NGOs coordinate various projects in the country; Poles have also started to open tourist businesses in Georgia proper.

What is more, all this popularity has been framed in ways that surprised me greatly – even during the war, the majority of the commentators shared the belief that the Polish and Georgian nations are "connected", that they share a brotherly bond, and that Georgians and Poles are in some not quite clearly defined way "similar". I have encountered this idea so often and in such different circumstances that it was only a matter of time until I became curious as to how this new "knowledge" about Georgia and Georgians could emerge and spread.

From the outset the ideas about commonality, similarity and special connections between Poles and Georgians (which, for brevity, I label "Polish–Georgian brotherhood" – since the term is used by many proponents of the idea) are formed in the context of a third nationality, namely the Russians. Georgia began to be popular in Poland during the Russo–Georgian war in 2008, and Russia has figured prominently as the "common enemy" in both

official and less official texts and conversations about the Polish–Georgian bond.

However, the mere designation of the common enemy did not adequately explain the whole "fashion for Georgia". Therefore, I decided to investigate the building blocks and structures of this new certainty about special Polish–Georgian relations: how exactly did it come to life? How is it shaped by ideas about and attitudes towards Russia? Does it have parallels in other parts of the world?

My interest in answering the latter question prompted me to opt for a comparative study and look at one more country where ideas about Russia play an important societal role, as they do in Poland. Could I detect any similarities between the treatment of the Caucasus in Poland and in other countries?

My choice fell to Serbia: a country where Russia is traditionally considered a historical ally, reliable partner, and sometimes even an "older brother". Attitudes toward Russia play an important role in Serbia's foreign policy and intellectual life, but also penetrate the most mundane contexts. A walk along Belgrade's main tourist street and the abundance of Russia- or Putin- related souvenirs in kiosks attest to that, as do elaborate discussions about Russia's investments or other initiatives in Serbia in the Serbian media.

Given this important role of Russia in Serbian political and public life, I wanted to check whether I could identify similar ideas of "brotherhood" or, conversely, enmity, towards Georgia or other Caucasus nations. I started collecting data without much expectation, thinking that I would probably find nothing comparable with the Polish case. However, I was surprised yet again: the abundance of references to the Caucasus in discussions about Serbia's relationship with Kosovo and the Yugoslav wars in 1991–1995, the sympathy expressed towards some small Caucasian nations such as Ossetians and Abkhazians, and the often-encountered motif of a Serbian–Armenian "community of suffering" encouraged me to proceed with the project and analyse Serbia's own "Caucasian brotherhoods".

The comparative aspect of this project enabled more general discussion of the popular and media constructions of brotherhoods and enmities between nations. Why do so many people feel an allegiance with a remote, often little-known nation? What are the components of such allegiances? What knowledge is created, what knowledge underlies and enables them in the first place? Can sentimental brotherhoods be conceived as responses to societal problems and ills?

My exploration of these issues took the form of a qualitative inquiry into people's ideas expressed in online communication. Like any qualitative inquiry, it involves a great deal of personal interpretative engagement and is influenced by the researcher's previous knowledge, experience, and beliefs. My selection of case studies was determined by the languages I speak fluently enough to understand nuanced political discussions and cultural-societal references within them. During the project, I reflected on my own position towards the ideas of brotherhood encountered in my materials and in

conversations I had with persons representing these ideas. My perspective on them changed with time from mere astonishment through fascination towards considering them as important components of personal geopolitical orientations and even a possible driver of actual foreign policy change.

In this dissertation I explore the questions of "Caucasian brotherhoods" in more detail. I hope that readers will be able to make up their own minds as to the importance and salience of the ideas of international brotherhoods on various geographical scales: in the analysed countries, the wider region of Central and Eastern Europe, and the political world of states.

Note on case study selection and themes

Out of all possible Caucasus-related themes, in this dissertation I concentrate on the brotherhood discourses. I focus on the Polish–Georgian and Serbian–Armenian cases, and on the ideas of "exotic" brotherhoods that connect the Serbs to the small nations of the Caucasus that since the 1990s inhabit their own *de facto* states, the Abkhazians and South Ossetians. The case studies have been selected based on the principle of the "greatest possible similarity", which allows me to explore similar processes of constructing ideas of brotherhood in two different countries and political contexts.

This is not the only possible approach for those interested in the intersection of notions of brotherhood between nations and representations of the Caucasus. Other possible research avenues not explored in the dissertation include analysis of: the ideas of Polish–Chechen brotherly connection that powerfully surfaced in the Polish press and civil society in the 1990s during the first Russo–Chechen war; public rejection of the ideas of an Azerbaijani–Serbian friendship "imposed from above" by the highest echelons of political power in Serbia as materialized in the statue of Heydar Aliyev erected in Belgrade in 2011; or the effects of the recent Armenian–Azerbaijani war in the autumn of 2020 on Serbian attitudes towards Armenia and the constructions of Serbian–Caucasian brotherhoods.

Another component of ideas of brotherhood that is signalled in my analysis, but is not explored in depth, is the role of religion. Especially in the case of Serbian–Armenian friendship, assumptions (if sometimes erroneous) of religious similarities are a clearly discernible component of geopolitical imaginations. The role of religion could also be explored more by paying attention to the assumed "religious revival" in post-Communist societies.

The gendered dimension of brotherly ideas and their masculine connotations are another possible research avenue. Especially the visual elements of brotherhood imaginations – photos and illustrations – could have delivered interesting data. However, this thesis is more interested in international brotherhood and friendship as (geo)political metaphors and answers to perceived problems of international relations, leaving the gender-related aspects of the issue for later research projects.

Although the themes signalled above merit further research, they do not easily lend themselves to a comparative analysis. Including them would cause an unnecessary aggregation of heterogenous examples that could result in a loss of cohesion and create difficulties in following the comparative logic of the text. I therefore decided not to explore them more in this dissertation, but find it worthwhile to signal their existence to the reader and mention them briefly in some of the articles that constitute this thesis.

2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The aim of this chapter is to clarify Poland's and Serbia's actual historical connection to the Caucasus and to Russia. This is necessary to understand the unexpectedness of the ideas of brotherhood that connect the two countries to the Caucasus. The historical background to these relationships illustrates the value of the comparative study for social research on the significance of Russia and the Caucasus in geopolitical imaginations and on geopolitical codes prevalent in the region of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) as represented by Poland and Serbia.

2.1 THE CAUCASUS AS OBJECT OF GEOPOLITICAL KNOWLEDGE

In this dissertation, I study the Caucasus as an object of geopolitical knowledge and its various materializations in two CEE countries, Poland and Serbia. I address knowledge claims formulated with relation to the Caucasus on three social levels of geopolitics: the popular – in everyday communication online; the practical – in foreign policy; and the formal – in the world of intellectual elites and academia (O'Tuathail 1999). Zooming in on the ideas of "brotherhood" and "friendship" between the selected nations of the Caucasus and Poland and Serbia is significant for understanding notions of international brotherhood in CEE more generally. These ideas are all the more surprising as neither countries has had a close relationship with the Caucasus region throughout its history (Litwin-Lewandowska 2017:193; Matović 2017:84).

Through analysing knowledge created in communication and debates that centre on the Caucasus, it is possible to gain an insight into the social production of knowledge not only on this region itself, but also on Russia. In Poland and Serbia alike, the Caucasus is interpreted and accessed through a distinctively "Russian lens", with ample references to both the Caucasus' own as well as Polish and Serbian connections to Russia. This is due to all parties' intricate histories of direct Russian rule (Poland, Caucasus) or Russian patronage (Serbia). For almost 200 years, "the main determining factor on the Caucasus has been Russia, and the policies of its rulers" (Cornell 2001:11). This view is universally shared by actors whose discourses on the Caucasus are scrutinized in the present dissertation.

The analysed knowledge claims are formulated in a particular domestic and international context and often transmitted as more or less formal "geopolitical analyses", no matter whether they come from foreign policy analysts, politicians, or "ordinary" internet users. These analyses discuss the

historical and political contexts in the respective countries and draw on a set of established political assumptions and historical facts well-known to the discussants.

In the following, I present the historical background needed to understand the role the Caucasus plays in the geopolitical debates and imaginations analysed in the later chapters.

2.2 POLAND AND THE CAUCASUS

According to Woźniak (1996), Polish relations with the Caucasus go back to the 17th century, when Polish kings started dispatching emissaries to Persia. On their way to the shah's court, Polish diplomats had to pass through the Caucasus which had been a territory of constant rivalry between the Ottoman Empire and Persia, later also Russia. During the 17th and 18th centuries, there was some trade activity involving Polish merchants purchasing "oriental" goods in the territory of today's Georgia and Armenia; apart from that, a group of Polish missionaries was active in Georgia, producing valuable ethnographic material on the local populations and customs, an important source of information about the Caucasus for scholars in Europe.[1]

The contacts between Poland and the Caucasus intensified in the 19th century when significant parts of both territories were incorporated into the Russian Empire. As this epoch plays an important role in contemporary discourses of the Polish–Georgian brotherhood, it will be examined here in more detail.

Eastern territories of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth were annexed by Russia in three consecutive partitions of 1772, 1793, and 1795. Western territories were annexed to Prussia, whereas the south became a part of the Habsburg Empire. The 123 years between the final partition and the regaining of independence in 1918 are crucially important for Polish nation building processes, historiography, foreign policy orientations, and geopolitical strategies subsequently developed in Poland. Poland's well-known negative attitudes towards Russia[2] are rooted in the memory of the partition period and the Russian partition zone (which, interestingly, is not the case for the memory of the two other partition zones, cf. Zarycki 2004:604). They are

[1] Especially important for this early knowledge transfer was Tadeusz Krusiński (1675–1757), a priest whose tractate *Tragica vertentis belli Persici historia…* about the fall of the Safavid dynasty, originally written in Latin, was translated in fragments into many European languages and published in numerous adaptations during the 18th century (Baranowski 1981).

[2] Poland was ranked the most Russophobic nation in the world in the Pew Research Center report in 2015. The survey measures global public opinion and is based on 45,435 face-to-face and telephone interviews in 40 countries (Stokes et al. 2015). Other surveys also classify Poland's public opinion as strongly anti-Russian, e.g. the Polish–Russian attitudes survey (Polska-Rosja Diagnoza Społeczna 2013, 2015).

supplemented by the recent memories of the socialist period and the Soviet domination of Poland, which resulted in significant territorial and population shifts as well as deep social, demographic, and cultural changes in the country.

Georgia was incorporated into the Russian Empire in several consecutive steps at the beginning of the 19th century. The whole of eastern Georgia was annexed by Russia in 1801, amongst local conflicts over the succession to the throne. The western parts followed in 1810, when Russia again played rivalries between local elites off against each other.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, Russia's territorial expansion to the south and east was in full swing, and new territories of the northern and southern Caucasus were continually being added to its Empire. In the South Caucasus, Russia faced two powerful rivals, the Ottoman Empire and Persia, and adopted the strategy of co-opting local Christian – Georgian and Armenian – elites in its quest against the Muslim rulers. Georgian King Irakli, hoping for substantial Russian protection against the Persian and Ottoman armies, signed the Georgievsk Treaty in 1783, recognizing the Russian protectorate of his lands, the eastern Georgian provinces of Kartli-Kakheti. However, the Russian armies failed to provide military support to Georgia and withdrew, leaving the country unable to defend itself against the Persian invasion and pillage expedition in 1795, which culminated in the burning of the capital, Tbilisi. The treaty of Georgievsk and King Irakli himself are important and contentious nodal points in modern Georgian memory culture (Batiashvili 2018:173f; Chikovani & Kakitelashvili 2015).

The official and mainstream national memory narratives in Georgia interpret its incorporation into the Russian Empire as an act of conquest and forcible occupation. Contemporary Georgian visions of the country's geopolitical situation stress its victimhood and abuse by greater powers, especially Russia (O'Tuathail 2017:103). In doing this, they strongly resemble the Polish view of victimization at Russia's hands, which is emphasized by my analysis of the Polish–Georgian brotherhood narrative in the following chapters.[3]

During the 19th century and up to the end of the First World War, Polish and Georgian territories formed part of the same empire which contributed to an intensification of contacts. A Polish community took root in the Georgian territories, comprised mostly of individuals who took advantage of the social

[3] The processes of incorporating Georgia and Poland into the Russian Empire show strong parallels. According to a Russian American historian, "Had the Georgians closely followed events in Crimea (1774–83) and in Poland (1772–95), they might have hesitated in placing their faith in the articles of the Treaty of Georgievsk. In both cases, the Russian government had moved to create states dependent on the Russian Empire (and in the Polish case, concluded a protectorate in September 1793 along similar lines to the one extended to Kartli-Kakhetia in 1783) and to maintain pro-Russian leaders in office. In both cases, civil disorder arising from conflicts between pro- and anti-Russian factions was used as an excuse by the Imperial government to dispatch troops and ultimately to extinguish the Crimean and Polish states, incorporating their territories directly into the Empire." (Gvosdev 2000:98).

and professional mobility afforded them by the Russian Empire (Woźniak 1996:257). Polish engineers, doctors, and military officers travelled to the Caucasus in search of new career opportunities. Whereas political deportees convicted after the Polish insurgency against Russia in 1831 dominated amongst Poles in the Georgian territories in the 1830s, the core of the Polish community was formed later in the 19th century by economic migrants in search of a living (Woźniak 1996:258f). Nevertheless, it is the memory of the political deportees, and not other Polish migrants in the Caucasus, that forms the cornerstone of the modern discourse of Polish–Georgian brotherhood analysed in this dissertation.

During the 19th century, Polish-born officers in the Russian army were present in the Caucasus, sometimes holding important positions in the Russian administration of the territories (e.g. Marek Maliński, governor of the Caucasus Governorate 1810–1812, and Piotr Zawielejski). This is a testament to the fact, nowadays rarely discussed, that a career in Russian state institutions had been an attractive choice for many Poles during partition (cf. Zarycki 2013). In relation to the Caucasus, it is often disputed whether some of the figures considered "Poles" – thus viewed as symbols of actual Polish–Georgian connections – can be afforded this status safely. Most of the time, there is very little information on them and their attitudes towards their Polish ancestry; alternatively, Polish historians of the Caucasus are not clear whether those individuals can be considered Poles at all due to, for instance, their Orthodox faith (Woźniak 1998:36).[4]

After the First World War both Poland and Georgia regained independent statehood, but only Poland managed to retain it, while Georgia was overrun by the Bolsheviks in 1921. During the brief period of Georgian independence, Poland officially recognized the country in 1921 and tried to establish a military alliance that would serve as the basis of the Promethean geostrategy developed by the circles around Marshal Józef Piłsudski (Włodarczyk 2016:468). The Promethean doctrine consisted of inciting unrest in the non-Russian republics of the Soviet Union with the aim of causing the state to descend into internal chaos and disintegrate.

According to some historians, Poland's interest in deepening an alliance with Georgia was also caused by Romantic visions of the similarity of national spirit in the two nations, promoted by the "Polish poets from the Caucasus"[5] in the 19th century (Furier 1998) – however, it is hard to determine the actual

[4] As a side note, determining someone's "Polishness" on the basis of religious faith is problematic. Although most ethnic Poles today declare themselves Catholics, this had not always been the case. In the past, Poland had comprised large swathes of land inhabited mostly by Orthodox populations, and a significant part of the Polish gentry was Orthodox as well. Nowadays, the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church has around half a million members (Mały Rocznik Statystyczny 2019:114).

[5] This group did not include Adam Mickiewicz, the Polish national poet *par excellence*, although some promoters of Polish-Georgian brotherhood ascribe claims about relatedness of both nations also to him.

popularity and especially reception of their works (cf. Ossowska & Filina 2015:25).

Despite the diplomatic contacts between Georgia and Poland and the Promethean ideas popular in the highest political circles of the Polish state at the beginning of the 1920s, Poland recognized the new Soviet border, which comprised the militarily overrun Georgia and other republics of the South Caucasus that enjoyed a brief period of independence between 1918–1922 (Armenia and Azerbaijan), as early as 1923 (Mądzik 1987–1988). The developments in the Caucasus, the red terror in the region, and political repressions which followed the incorporation of Georgia to the USSR resulted in a wave of emigration; the majority of the political exiles settled in France, while a small group of Georgian army officers established itself in Poland. The anti-Soviet policies of Marshal Piłsudski favoured their arrival, allowing the officers to join the Polish armed forces with unchanged military ranks. The Georgian group was an asset in the development of geopolitical strategies, especially the Promethean doctrine.

The Promethean strategy did not bring concrete results for the pre-war Polish foreign policy elites and was finally abandoned as state policy after the Second World War, although it survived in émigré circles outside socialist Poland (Landmann 2018). After the Second World War, with Georgia a Soviet republic and Poland a Soviet satellite, all contacts were framed by the new geopolitical realities in the Eastern Bloc. There was some incidental scholarly and cultural exchange between Poland and the Soviet Georgia, such as academic visits and themed events about Georgian culture in 1959 (Szymański 1992). In popular culture, Georgia functioned very much in accordance with Soviet stereotypes, as the land of sun, sea, and tea plantations – this vision is expressed in the hit song *Batumi* from 1963. The legendary TV series *Four tankmen and a dog* (*Czterej pancerni i pies*) also featured a Georgian character, the exemplary Soviet soldier Grigori Saakashvili.

Interest in Georgian affairs revived in Poland only after the fall of the Soviet Union. In the 1990s, historical inquiry into Georgian–Polish relations started, resulting in new publications and a scholarly journal, Pro-Georgia. This interest was limited largely to academic circles; some cooperation between Polish and Georgian academics emerged, the focus being on research into "commonalities" and "shared histories" of the two nations (e.g. 2007 conference at Tbilisi State University entitled "Poland and Georgia: The importance of common history for the future in the uniting Europe"; Ossowska & Filina 2015:36).

It is important to note that Georgia-related inquiry was framed as an aspect of the newly regained freedom to research themes neglected during the socialist period and as an element of the unique Polish expertise on Russia and its neighbourhood (cf. Kuus 2007, 2011). The first frame is important because the Polish–Georgian brotherhood narrative includes a strong belief in the importance of the memory of pre-war Poland and legitimizes the revival of its Promethean geostrategic tradition through the authority of historical figures

like Marshal Piłsudski. The second frame has a bearing on the direction of Polish foreign policy after 1989. It was vividly present in the late Polish president Lech Kaczyński's support for Georgia before and during the Russo–Georgian war.[6]

In his foreign policy initiatives, President Kaczyński emphasized the role of Poland as the model and guide for other post-Communist and post-Soviet nations; Georgia and the Caucasus started to feature more strongly as objects of concrete policy initiatives. Kaczyński envisioned a comprehensive policy not only towards Georgia, but the whole Caucasus region and CEE, defining it as comprising the territories "from Azerbaijan to Estonia" (Kaczyński, in Janke & Zychowicz 2008). Some authors point to the fact that latent Polish foreign policy ambitions in the East could finally be realized once the country became member of NATO and the EU (Kuźniar 2009). These foreign policy ambitions materialized in Poland's "Eastern policy" (polityka wschodnia), whose direction was influenced by the "Giedroyc-Mieroszewski doctrine", a foreign policy paradigm dominant in post-Communist Poland. The doctrine's main tenet is the necessity of upholding Poland's authority in the West by (re)building its authority in the East (Szczepanik 2011) and "geopolitical restraint" to avoid possible accusations of "Polish imperialism" (Bartosiak 2020). Establishing a "buffer zone" of friendly or associated democratic countries between Poland and Russia is seen as a guarantee of Poland's international security; therefore, the aspirations of those countries to join Western political structures have always been strongly supported.

Poland's claims to unique expertise on the East (Kuus 2011) and its adoption of the role of a "bridge" between East and West (Mälksö 2010; Longhurst & Zaborowski 2007) culminated in the creation of the Eastern Partnership policy framework within the EU on a joint Polish–Swedish initiative in 2009. The Law and Justice Party (PiS), first time in government 2005–2007, largely continued the Giedroyc-Mierowszewski line on policy towards the East. An important policy twist in this government concerned Russia, which was declared an openly hostile country whose power monopolies in the post-Soviet regions should be challenged or neutralized (Chojan 2016).

It is important to stress that after Kaczyński's tragic death in April 2010, the newly elected president, Komorowski, declared a continuation of his predecessor's policy towards Georgia, which included strengthening practical cooperation and contacts, foreign aid transfer, and even the launch of direct flights between the two countries (Dyner, Adamski & Sikorski 2011:87f).

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[6] E.g. Lech Kaczyński's speech in Tbilisi on 12th August 2008 in which he talks about "Russia's face that we have known for hundreds of years". Available on YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LsofTk9HZ-c (accessed 10 June 2020). The text in Polish and in English translation can be read online at: https://publica.pl/teksty/jestesmy-tu-razem-50926.html (accessed 20 July 2020).

The Polish engagement in Georgian affairs has been called "the Caucasus trap" of Polish foreign policy (Kuźniar 2012:378). In 2007 Georgia was proclaimed Poland's strategic partner, after Kaczyński's first visit to Tbilisi, although trade revenues and economic ties with the country were minuscule; it was also important in Kaczyński's energy diversification initiatives. Poland took the role of Georgia's international advocate, arguing for the country's rapid access to NATO and for Western guarantees for its territorial integrity. Poland's lobbying for Georgia proved largely unsuccessful during the Bucharest NATO summit in 2008, where neither Georgia nor Ukraine received the hoped-for Membership Action Plans. This came as a shock in Poland and brought negotiations about anti-ballistic US missiles on Polish territory to an abrupt end; questions about the actual willingness of NATO to defend its new Eastern European members started to surface for the first time (Michta 2009:372).

The interest in the Caucasus and its rising presence in Polish official foreign policy ("practical geopolitics") was reflected in the media, especially during the Russo–Georgian war in August 2008. The Polish media unanimously took the side of Georgia in the war, presenting Russia as the clear aggressor and Georgia as the victim, without much consideration of actual events, including the Georgian shelling of the South Ossetian capital Tskhinvali that started the war. A quantitative study of the Polish print press reporting on the Russo–Georgian war showed that all the analysed major newspapers (*Rzeczpospolita, Gazeta Wyborcza, Dziennik, Fakt*) took a clear stance supporting the Georgian and condemning the Russian side, with differences only in the degree of support (Stępińska 2011).

A rare comprehensive study of Polish print and online media reporting on the Russo–Georgian war established that journalists attempting to publish material to change the mainstream pro-Georgian line and show the complexity of the conflict situation faced substantial difficulties (Domagała 2014a). Wiktor Bater, a well-known war correspondent, was fired from the Polish state TV broadcaster TVP following his reports from South Ossetia criticizing the Georgian president for shelling a city full of sleeping civilians (Dziennikarz zwolniony z TVP, 2009).

According to Domagała (2014b:12), the Polish press, both print and online, was not reporting the war in a reliable way, instead presenting only one (US and Georgian) version of events; the reporting was manipulated, emotional and strongly in line with strict editorial prescriptions, dominated by judgemental language and represented the Russian Federation in a tendentious and stereotypical manner. Interestingly, Domagała concludes that "the positive image of Georgia [in the press] was an antithesis of Russia's image and was based on the natural fondness towards this country and its inhabitants" (2014b:12).

However, one needs to ask why exactly should it be "natural" in Poland to feel fondness towards a remote country like Georgia? A country with which Poland has had only rare, if not ephemeral, and especially not widely

publicized, contacts throughout history? Why is it natural, furthermore, that Polish contemporary travel writing on Georgia resembles more "love declarations" than reports, as a recent analysis suggests (Massaka 2019)?

This question is the departure point of the present dissertation.

2.3 SERBIA AND THE CAUCASUS

The Serbian lands and the contemporary Caucasus share a history of belonging to the same state, the Ottoman Empire. Between the 15th and 19th centuries, the whole Balkan peninsula, all the way north to central Hungary and Bosnia, was gradually incorporated into the Ottoman state. Before Russia arrived in the Caucasus, both North and South Caucasus had been embattled territory and an object of power rivalry between the Ottomans and the Safavids of Persia. This rivalry settled in 1555, when a formal division of influence spheres was reached (King 2008:22); however, for the Armenian and Georgian noble elites, this changed little in terms of having to negotiate the positions of their Christian lands and the status of the Christian populations within the Muslim empires they formed a part of. The situation of Christians in the Balkans was similar, which led to the development of powerful enemy images important until today.

The master national narratives and historiographies of the Balkan states interpret the Ottoman rule as the ultimate "yoke" (Gara 2017:62). The negative image of "the Turk", expressed in the proverbial syntagma "eternal enemy" (*vekovni neprijatelj*), is a constant of Serbian intellectual and public culture. This image includes accusations of the destruction of the Serbian state, aristocracy and culture, ascribing to the Turks a hatred towards the Serbs more intense than towards other Balkan nations and denying that the Ottoman presence in the Balkans may have had any positive influence (Milosavljević 2002:285). This attitude strongly resembles the memory of the Russian heritage in the Russian partition zone of Poland. It also resonates very well with the Armenian perception of the Turks as perpetrators of genocide against the Armenian nation (the "Great Catastrophe", *Medz Yeghern*), used in the brotherhood discourses examined within this thesis.

Of the three ideas of brotherhood connecting Serbia to the Caucasus (Serbian–Armenian, Serbian–Ossetian, Serbian–Abkhazian) analysed in this dissertation, the only available historical studies consider Serbia's relations with Armenia. To my knowledge, there is no research on any possible connections or relations between the Serbs and the nations of the North Caucasus[7] apart from works that deal with the so-called "alternative history"

[7] Some ethnographic research delved into the presence of Circassians in Kosovo (Sikimić 2004; 2005). However, these North Caucasian peoples arrived in the Balkans via the Ottoman Empire as refugees from Imperial Russia in the 1860s, not through any direct association with the Serbs. The

of Serbia, analysing historical fantasies of Serbs actually being the "oldest nation on the planet" whose roots go back to the Caucasus region (Radić 2005). Therefore, in the remainder of this section I concentrate on the history of Serbian–Armenian relations.

The Armenian presence in Serbia dates back to the 13th century but its early history is not well known (Matović 2013:61). From the earliest period, only traces of religious Armenian-influenced architecture are found (Lazić 2014:26). The first official mentions of Armenians in Serbian cities date to the 17th century (Matović 2017:92). Between the 14th and 17th centuries, Armenians settled in Serbia in consecutive small waves; a more numerous and significant diaspora started to form in the 18th century. Armenians settled in cities and trade centres, most importantly Belgrade and Novi Sad.

Serbian–Armenian relationships developed largely within the economic framework of the Ottoman Empire, where the Armenians formed an important merchant stratum, contributing to public life within the Ottoman state (Krikorian 1978; Matović 2017:94). Armenian merchants had decisively expanded their international outreach during and in the aftermath of the Cretan War (1645–1669) between Venice and the Ottomans, which resulted in the Ottoman takeover of this important island. Armenian traders established outposts and settlements along the Danube and the Tsarigrad Road (*Carigradski drum*, "Istanbul Road", "Great Road"), one of the most important Balkan transport roads connecting Belgrade with Istanbul. In the 17th and 18th centuries, around 200 families of Armenian merchants and artisans lived in Belgrade; this situation even began to threaten the position of local Serbian merchants because the Armenians positioned themselves strongly as mediators between important Western European and Ottoman trade centres (Ćiraković 2018:19).

New waves of Armenian immigration to Serbia after the country regained its independence from the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century are connected to the so-called "Armenian question" and the rivalry between Russia, Turkey and Great Britain over the protection of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. After the pogroms of 1875/1876, 1895/1896, 1909, and 1915–1923, several hundred Armenian families fled to Serbia, settling in various cities and establishing the modern "Armenian colony" in the country (Matović 2013:63). The history of these migrations to the Serbian lands is traceable in the Archive of Vojvodina and the Historical Archives of Novi Sad (Lazić 2014:38). For this project, my interviewees included descendants of this wave of migrants.

There is, to my knowledge, no specific research on relations between the Serbian and Armenian lands; research on the Armenian community in Serbia and the wider Balkans has also been scarce (Matović 2017:111; Ovakimjan 1993:2). Because of the lack of direct historical connections between the Serbs and the nations of the Caucasus, one needs to consider them within the wider

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Circassians are widely believed to have fought for the Nazis in the Second World War and are therefore negatively stereotyped (Taboroši 2011:81).

framework of Serbian–Ottoman or Serbian–Russian relations, and later as an aspect of the Yugoslav relationship with the Soviet Union.

Around the time the Serbs engaged Russia in their struggle for independence, internationalizing the Serbian question at the beginning of the 19th century (first Serbian uprising 1804–1813), the Russian Empire was actively conquering the Caucasus, tearing parts of it off from the Ottomans and Persians. Simultaneously, Russia provided military and material aid to the Serbian uprising, even sending the first official Russian diplomat to Belgrade in 1807 (Jovanović 2012:86), and diplomatic assistance to restore elements of Serbian statehood by securing Serbian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire in 1838 (Jovanović 2012:88).

During the first half of the 19th century, through the military successes in the Russo–Turkish wars, Russia strengthened its role as the official protector of (largely Orthodox) Christians residing in the Ottoman Empire, a status going back as far as the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774 (Davidson 1973:463). At the same time, most of the eastern (modern-day) Armenian territory already formed part of the Russian Empire, which took it over from Persia with the Treaty of Turkmenchay ending the Russo–Persian war (1826–1828), whereas the western Armenian lands were controlled by the Ottomans.

From the Ottoman period, there is no evidence of any direct cooperation between the Serbian and Armenian nationalist movements in the 19th century apart from ephemeral ideas like the "Balkan Confederation"[8] postulated to include Armenia and the coastal territories of Asia Minor; a factor to consider here is the known enmity between the various nationalities comprising the Christian *millets*[9] of the Ottoman Empire (Ubicini in Kamouzis 2013:18). The Ottoman Armenians were organized in their own *millet*[10], whereas the Serbs belonged to the Rum (Orthodox) millet, dominated by the Greeks but comprising a collection of Christian nations, including Bulgarians, Serbs, Vlachs, Albanians, Arabs, and Georgians. According to Bloxham (2007:302), Armenian political activities to promote the "Armenian national cause" in the Ottoman Empire, unlike those of the Balkan Christians, were practically non-existent up until the 1870s – by which time the principality of Serbia had long established its autonomous status within the Ottoman Empire (Pavlowitch 2002:33). Admittedly, national ideas spread from Balkan to Armenian intellectuals; the Armenian-language press extensively discussed events in the

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[8] Postulated by the socialist League for a Balkan Confederation established in France in 1894 and comprised of Serbian, Romanian, and Bulgarian intellectuals (Stavrianos 1944:151).

[9] The *millet* system was a dynamic institutional framework organizing relations of the Ottoman state with its non-Muslim subjects. Christians and Jews were organized within self-governing confessional communities which oversaw their judiciary and taxation relatively autonomously. In the 19th century, after the Tanzimat reforms, millets started to be understood as linguistic and ethnic communities, became nationalized, and their number increased (cf. Gara 2017; Akgönül 2013:65f).

[10] Later, with the increase of the number of *millets*, the Armenians were split between the Armenian Gregorian, Catholic and Protestant *millets*.

Balkans and even published some translations of Serbian literature (Ovakimjan 1993:91).

After the First World War, the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the formation of the Kingdom of Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes (SHS, since 1929 officially Yugoslavia, 1918–1941), the relationship between the new Balkan state and the equally new Soviet Union was one of ideological enmity between the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and the "dictatorship of king Aleksandar Karađorđević" (Romanenko 2011:11). The policy of the Serbian and later SHS governments towards the "Russian question" which opened with the establishment of the Bolsheviks, was determined by their traditional pro-Russian orientation and the longstanding relations between the Serbian and tsarist Russian elites; this resulted in unconditional support for the anti-Bolshevik forces and a breakdown of diplomatic ties as early as 1919 (Jovanović 2006:44). Yugoslavia officially recognized the Soviet Union only in 1940 (Jovanović:45).

The SHS Kingdom received a substantial number of Russian exiles after the defeat of the Whites during the civil war that followed the October Revolution, arriving in three consecutive waves in 1919–1920 (Jovanović 2006:138). The community of White Russians concentrated in Belgrade, numbering 41,000 persons at its peak (Jovanović 1996:26) and contributed substantially to the development of social and academic life in the new state (Babović 2007:8). Given the multicultural nature of the Russian Empire, the émigré communities consisted of persons of various ethnic origin; however, not many studies about the actual ethnic composition and representation (if any) of Caucasian nations among the exiles who took up residence in Yugoslavia have been conducted. The only somewhat researched non-Russian ethnic group among the White Russian migrants in Yugoslavia has been the Kalmyks (Damjanović 2016:190).

After the Second World War, Yugoslavia's relations with the Caucasus continued within the wider framework of its relations with the Soviet Union and were characterized by periodical crises. The deepest one was the split between Stalin and Tito in 1948 which resulted in Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Communist Information Bureau and marked the beginning of the country's independent "path to socialism". During the Communist period, no special relations were entertained with the Soviet republics of the Caucasus. Moreover, in Serbia proper, a significant negligence towards the Armenian heritage was observable, marked by destruction of whole historical sites, such as the Armenian Church in Novi Sad in 1963 (Lazić 2014). Such treatment of Armenian heritage continues today, including the demolition of the "Armenian building" dating from before the First World War and the removal of an Armenian tombstone in the centre of Novi Sad in 2016 (Kovačević 2016).

During the Communist period, Armenia or the wider Caucasus was not discussed in the Yugoslav public sphere; the common associations that it elicited were, at most, talented chess players and the famous Radio Erevan jokes (Bajić 1999:17). There were only two instances when a public interest in

Armenia was observable on a larger scale: in March 1983, when Turkish ambassador to Yugoslavia Galip Balkar was assassinated in Belgrade by two young Armenian activists – with the media strongly condemning Armenian terrorism but also discussing the history of Turkish–Armenian conflict (Bajić 2003:17; Petrović 2017); and in December 1988, after the catastrophic earthquake in Spitak in the Armenian SSR, followed by worldwide mobilization of humanitarian aid to the region.

A tragic accident of the Yugoslav aeroplane carrying humanitarian help which crashed near Yerevan on 14 December 1988 led to the death of all seven crew members and was extensively reported in the Yugoslav media. This event seems to have been one of catalysts of the emerging discourse about Armenian–Serbian friendship. In response to the tragedy, two traditional Armenian cross-stones (khachkars) were erected in the cities of Novi Sad and Zemun; a monument at the site of the accident is dedicated to the memory of the Yugoslav pilots (Bajić 2003:111). Some of the families of the crew travel periodically to Armenia to attend official commemorations of the earthquake (Sudar 2018). Ideas of Armenian–Serbian brotherhood are thus cultivated at the level of personal contacts and private communications; the tragic character of such ties, stemming from a plane accident amidst a catastrophic earthquake, adds a complementary layer of personal suffering to the general framework of victimization that connects the two nations within the brotherly discourse.

Personal and semi-institutional ties to Armenia are also entertained by various associations of international friendship. The khachkars and a series of publications about Armenia were produced with the help of the Serbian–Armenian Association (*Srpsko-jermensko društvo*, later operating as the Society for Serbian–Armenian Friendship, *Društvo srpsko-jermenskog prijateljstva*) established in Belgrade in 1990 (Bajić 2003:124) on a wave of fashion for various national friendship associations that emerged in the 1980s[11]. The association had varying success but, like most other Armenia-themed organizations, maintained a low profile (Siekierski 2016:215) and was plagued by internal conflict (personal communications).

2.4 GEOPOLITICAL DISCOURSES OF THE CAUCASUS – REMOTE REGION AS PART OF GEOPOLITICAL VISIONS

Caucasus as a region interests scholars from various disciplines. It has been researched with respect to its geopolitical location, ethnic diversity, linguistic complexity, politics and military conflicts.

[11] Other associations of this kind included Serbian–Israeli, Serbian–Romanian and Serbian–Chinese.

The Caucasus has been a source of various political and literary images, motives and stereotypes that lend themselves to discourse analysis. In Greek mythology, the Caucasus is where Prometheus perpetually experiences his punishment for stealing fire from the Gods and bringing it to humankind. In the tenth century, Arab geographer Al-Masudi observed that the Caucasus was "a mountain of languages", a complicated linguistic and ethnic mosaic, a fact that had been noticed much earlier by the ancient Romans (Catford 1977).

As a region lying on a – variously defined – border between Asia and Europe, the Caucasus has proved a source of fascination for travellers, poets, and analysts since at least the 18th century, when Russia started its conquest of both the North and South slopes of the Caucasus mountain range. Works belonging to the Western literary canon – such as the *Prisoner of the Caucasus* by Aleksandr Pushkin, *Cossacks* by Leo Tolstoy, and Lermontov's Caucasian poems – provide ready-made reservoirs of Caucasus images until this day.

In this dissertation, I consider the Caucasus discursively, as a place "produced" within communication, imagined, and performed by actors with various interests, who attach various meanings to the region and its role in their own countries' geopolitics. Prior to this study, the Caucasus has been approached discursively in studies of Russian literature, history and culture. Most of this research has taken a postcolonial approach in the tradition of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), although this perspective is arguably not fully applicable to the Russian case (Schimmelpenick van der Oye 2006:8), The Caucasus, in this view, functions within the Russian cultural realm as the orientalized and exoticized periphery, similarly to the Middle East in the West. These researchers have been interested in Russian discourses of empire, their emergence, evolution, codification, and images of the region produced within them (Layton 1994; Todorova 2006; Etkind 2011; Hokanson 2008; Suny 2001; Barret 1998).

Russian images of the Caucasus are important because they provide a lens through which the region is often viewed in other parts of the world, not least because of the popularity of the Russian literature in 19th-century Europe (Šljivančanin 2017; Cross 2012:28f). The Russian visions of the Caucasus influenced Western ways of imagining the region, as exemplified in Alexandre Dumas' *Journey to the Caucasus* (1859) (Clayton 2011; Shixlaiev in Gileva, 2017), in the Western visions of "Caucasus highlanders", and even in traditions of supporting their fight against Russia (King 2007:241; King 2008:5f).

The Russian romanticization of the Caucasus has been reflected in the works of the "Caucasian circle" of Polish poets in the 19th century (Ossowska & Filina 2015). Contemporary Serbian poetry has also operated with such images, especially when discussing Armenia (the legendary Serbian poet Desanka Maksimović dedicated many works to Armenian themes).[12] Some less-known poets were also interested in Armenia (Simonjan 2002). In the

[12] Especially in her poems *Ararat* and *Yerevan*, published first in 1968 (cf. reference list) as well as in many translations and interviews.

materials analysed for this dissertation, it is hard to establish a direct inspiration stemming from this poetry; however, the romanticization and exoticization of the region is clearly visible.

In the Western geographical imagination and current geopolitical discourses, modes of perceiving the Caucasus resemble those used to interpret the Balkans. Both regions function as "problematic" territories with high potential for ethnic conflict, inhabited by people who live by specific unwritten moral codes, even representing "savage Europe" (Todorova 2009:62, 117; Dijkink 1996:110; Suny 2010).

In these imaginations, the original romanticization of both regions merges with the newer geopolitical notions of "conflict-prone territories", or territories that lie on the border between Europe and the realm of the "Other". They are often referred to as "in-between" spaces, where various cultures and religions meet (de Waal 2010:1; King 2008:9), which adds to their conflict potential, captured in popular metaphors such as the "powder keg" (cf. Goldsworthy 2002). Nowadays the Caucasus, similarly as the Balkans, is widely considered a territory of geopolitical rivalry between the East (Russia with its concept of the "Near Abroad"; Turkey; Iran) and the West (the USA's global hegemonic ambitions; EU) (Gachechiladze 2002; Suny 2010).

I employ the concept of "geopolitical imagination" to point to how the Caucasus is made into an object of knowing and written into the mainstream national narratives in Poland and Serbia. According to Dodds and Dittmer (2008:447) "geopolitical imaginations are the results of subjects' attempts to make sense of the world by associating political values with various parts of the map". In the cases described in this dissertation, I ask why certain parts of the otherwise hardly known region of the Caucasus are ascribed qualities of "brotherliness", similarity, and commonality that allow for including them into a bigger "we camp".

Dodds and Dittmer discuss geopolitical imaginations as highly contextual phenomena, whose development and structure depends on a given local context. Discourses of brotherhood with the Caucasian nations in Poland and Serbia exemplify this localized character of geopolitical imaginations: although both postulate a special brotherly connection and the need for one's own state agency in foreign policy to deepen this connection, their vectors of geopolitical allegiance and the definitions of friends and foes are diametrically opposed.

The concept of geopolitical imagination is closely connected to the idea of geopolitical vision presented by Dijkink (1996:11), understood as ideas "concerning the relation between one's own and other places, involving feelings of (in)security or (dis)advantage and/or invoking ideas about a collective mission or foreign policy strategy". Importantly, a geopolitical vision may emanate from the state, but does not have to be shared by the majority of its population. The two cases analysed in this dissertation exemplify these two possibilities: the idea of Polish–Georgian brotherhood is incorporated into the wider foreign policy and national narratives in the country, whereas the

Serbian ideas of brotherhood with selected Caucasus nations do not enjoy such official state support and operate more on the everyday, mundane level.

3 THEORETICAL BUILDING BLOCKS

This project blends two main theoretical approaches to thinking about places, national identities, and knowledge: critical geopolitics, which developed as a critical rescaling of traditional, pre-war geopolitical theory, beginning in the 1980s; and the "new" sociology of knowledge that follows the phenomenological tradition of Schütz and social constructivism of Berger and Luckmann.

In sections 3.1 and 3.2, I discuss the theories in turn, specifically their implications for the field of media and communication. In section 3.3, I explain how these two theoretical building blocks cross-fertilize in this dissertation, and present my own take on the usefulness of a social-knowledge orientation for critical geopolitical analysis.

3.1 CRITICAL GEOPOLITICS

Scholars grouped under the label "critical geopolitics" are interested in critical analyses of geographical and geopolitical assumptions underpinning our understandings of power distributions in space and the world of global politics (Agnew 2003:2). Critical geopolitical scholarship understands geopolitics as an "interpretative cultural practice and discursive construction of ontological claims" (Dodds, Kuus & Sharp 2013:7) about places, regions, and peoples.

Critical geopolitics emerged in the 1980s and 1990s within human geography, starting with works analysing contemporary foreign policy strategies and the geopolitical thought of individuals identified as forefathers of geopolitics (O'Tutahail 1986, 1996; Crampton & O'Tuathail 1996; Livingstone 1993; Holdar 1992; Gregory 1994; Heffernan 2007). This approach might be understood as emerging from and participating in the wider linguistic or cultural turn in the social sciences, given its links to poststructuralism, feminism, cultural studies, and postcolonial critique (Dodds, Kuus & Sharp 2013:10).

The departure point was a critique of the "God's eye view of the world" (Dodds 2007:5) to be mapped and inscribed by great powers according to purposedly scientific theories of global power distribution, represented by traditional geopolitical scholars such as Halford Mackinder, Rudolf Kjellén, Friedrich Ratzel, and Karl Haushofer. Critical geopolitics scholars developed a strong interest in questions of national identity formation, practices of representation of spaces and places that underlie foreign policy decisions, power relationships in discourses used to frame territorial questions, and naming practices, always underscoring the implicit and irreducible textuality and discursivity of their objects of analysis (O'Tuathail 1996:52).

No explicit body of “critical geopolitical theory” exists. According to Kuus (2017), “the key trait of critical geopolitics is that it is not a theory-based approach [...] concerns of critical geopolitics are problem-based and present-oriented”: Many critical geopolitical analyses adopt a discursive lens, inspired by Foucauldian discourse studies. They share an understanding of “geopolitics as an interpretative cultural practice and a discursive construction of ontological claims”.

Critical geopolitics highlights the need for a careful attention to various social “levels” on which geopolitics is practiced in societies. Whereas in the past, geopolitics had been considered mainly as a political practice of imperial states or a scholarly intellectual endeavour aiding imperial landgrabs, critical scholars consider many dimensions of geopolitics not analysed before, including popular culture and its understandings of particular places and communities, mundane discourses, media, and films (Dodds 2013; Sharp 1993, 2000; Dittmer 2013; Dittmer & Dodds 2008).

In a programmatic article, O’Tuathail (1999) argues that rather than merely an aid to statecraft or a shortcut for interstate rivalry, geopolitics should be understood as operating on various societal levels and in various locales. He proposes a distinction followed in this dissertation: formal geopolitics, produced by academics and intellectuals; practical geopolitics, practiced by foreign policy elites; and popular geopolitics, encompassing products of popular culture and the media.[13]

These social levels of geopolitics are not divorced, but influence and interact with each other in complex ways that analysts need to consider. In this dissertation, Article IV traces such interactions in the production of Polish and Serbian ideas about brotherhood with the Caucasus between the levels of media and intellectual elite discourse, foreign policy practitioners and media audiences (“ordinary people”).

Two characteristics of the critical geopolitical approach particularly important for my project are: 1. its insistence on the discursivity of geopolitics, allowing for ample use of media and textual materials in empirical analysis; and 2. its interest in processes of knowledge production and operation inspired by Foucault (O’Tuathail 1996:88).

In discussing traditional geopolitics, O’Tuathail (1996:7) points to the fact that it was originally designed to produce knowledge of the state, thus bringing about power crucial for modern forms of government. In fact, geopolitics seems to have functioned as an “instrumental form of knowledge and rationality” (O’Tuathail 1999:107). Despite all modern scholarly critiques, it is still often understood in this way, which is discussed in Article V.

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[13] O’Tuathail (1999:117) proposes also a fourth category of “structural geopolitics” encompassing “the modern geopolitical condition”. This category has not been used in the present dissertation, as it seems to be captured by a careful analysis of processes unfolding on the other three levels combined. Its breadth exceeds by far the modest ambitions of my work.

The knowledge produced by various agents in the brotherhood discourses analysed in this dissertation is often underpinned by proposedly rational foreign policy calculations and almost always accompanied by claims of scientific objectivity that lend it an aura of authority. The "scientific authority" of geopolitics and its use by advocates and opponents of particular international friendships is evident even in the analysis of affect- and emotion-induced online forum discussions in Article V.

Equipped with a critical geopolitical understanding of the tradition of geopolitics, in this dissertation I question the "objectivity" of the brotherhood claims, and point to their historical and contextual roots. To do that, I treat the brotherhood discourses as geopolitical imaginations and visions (see Section 2.4) which need to be carefully analysed in their local and international contexts.

Geopolitical imaginations centred on the Caucasus are deeply rooted in the historical and domestic contexts of the countries analysed here. Therefore, I recount strongly localized cases of brotherhood discourses that claim political, spiritual and ethnic connections with a remote region. Because the phenomenon is so complex, my analysis of it profited from the critical geopolitical approach, which tends to highlight "the messy spatiality of international politics" (Kuus 2017). Most important of all, I did not take at face value the geographical and historical claims on which the brotherhood discourses are based. The understanding that geography as such is not a "natural" precursor to and basis for geopolitics and claims that this is the case are in fact geopolitical practices themselves (Kuus 2017), embedded in the critical geopolitical tradition, informed my interpretative work and helped me to discern crucial components of the ideas of brotherhood.

3.2 THE « NEW » SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE

The "new" sociology of knowledge (Schnettler, Knoblauch & Raab, in Babich 2017) goes back to Berger and Luckmann's seminal book *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966). One of its aims was to push the hitherto peripheral subdiscipline into the centre of the sociological endeavour (Berger & Luckmann 1966:29).

In their book, Berger and Luckman moved away from the traditional sociology of knowledge, which acknowledged the inherent sociality of knowledge but concerned itself mostly with specialized areas of scientific reasoning (Mannheim, Scheler). Instead, they postulated that a new empirical sociology of knowledge should encompass the whole societal universe, concentrating on the everyday distribution and origins of knowledge – the "life world" (Knoblauch 2011:132). Their research focus is social knowledge: "the sum total of 'what everybody knows' about a social world, an assemblage of maxims, morals, proverbial nuggets of wisdom, values and beliefs, myths, and so forth" (Berger & Luckmann 1966:65). In other words, "the structure of

knowledge in everyday life is taken as the all-encompassing ground from which other forms of knowledge are but specific derivations" (Schnettler, Knoblauch & Raab 2017:238).

Berger and Luckmann's postulates were well received by the scientific community at the point of publication. However, in later years "the anglosaxon speaking universe of social scientific discourse [...] got the sociology of knowledge out of its mind" (Knoblauch 2011:133). Nevertheless, in the German-speaking world, the theory continued to develop, as did methodological approaches based in it (e.g. the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse, or SKAD).

The "new" sociology of knowledge, focusing on the everyday realities of people, their interaction, and communication, is well suited to asking questions addressed in this dissertation: How are geopolitical imaginations formed in communication? How do people assemble notions about a certain region as their body of "knowledge" about it?

Sociology of knowledge and tools developed within it to analyse structures and orderings of social knowledge are useful for analysing media and communication. The new sociology of knowledge has itself been labelled "the communicative paradigm" in knowledge research (Knoblauch 1995, in Keller 2005). These two fields complement each other in this thesis: I analyse data sourced from the media, to examine a broader scene of knowledge circulation between various levels of knowledge production (formal geopolitics, practical geopolitics, everyday contexts). All those levels and the circulation of ideas between them are connected by the concept of discourse as defined by Foucault: "regulated, structured practices of sign usage", structured according to similar rules of formation, with concrete material manifestations in various practices (Keller 2011:51).

The Foucauldian tradition brought to this study by the new theoreticians of the sociology of knowledge is well suited to analysing geopolitical imaginations and ways people understand the world around them in terms of geopolitics. This tradition is a basis of SKAD, my dissertation main metholodological approach, and blends well critical geopolitics (see Section 3.1).

Building from the sociology of knowledge and its approach to social construction, geopolitics, and its forms are understood here as a discourse – a practice of meaning making that is established by discursive events, composed of utterances made by actors, who speak and perform in specific social settings and make use of certain stocks of knowledge.

The practices of geopolitical discourse examined in the articles for this thesis include online commenting, engagement with travelogue books or political commentary by elite intellectuals and pundits, and more general engagements with media products that are often framed as "geopolitical" (magazines, TV programmes, expert commentary etc.).

The stocks of knowledge available to participants in a geopolitical discourse depend on the social and historical context in which they speak. Geopolitical knowledge understood in this way forms a "horizon of shared meanings

established by actors interacting upon common concerns, developed through the continual permutations of such interactions" (Keller 2020:60).

3.2.1 (POPULAR) SOCIAL KNOWLEDGE

As this project is interested in ways of knowing the Caucasus as a political region, it is necessary to present what the "knowing" analysed here implies in practice. Political and geographical entities, including one's own country, can be "known" in many ways; they are analysed by scholars, commented upon by journalists, and acted upon – economically, militarily, symbolically – by politicians. They are also "known" by ordinary people – through typical, culturally or socially established associations which they evoke, often interpreted using "everyday common sense" (Hall & O'Shea 2013; Billig 1995); through media and other types of representation (Higgins 2004; Anderson 2018) and, last but not least, through everyday experiences, including holidays, personal encounters, reading travelogue books and travel sections in magazines, language learning, TV viewing, attending lectures, concerts, and work (Meier 2012).

One can "know" a place, its people, geography, and history in myriad ways. To avoid epistemological chaos, it is necessary to qualify the knowledge examined for this project. Coming from the social constructivist tradition, my five case studies all examine social knowledge as understood by Berger and Luckmann: "whatever passes for 'knowledge' in a society, regardless of the ultimate validity or invalidity (by whatever criteria) of such 'knowledge'" (1966:15). In this project, terms "social knowledge" and "popular social knowledge" are used interchangeably; prefix "popular" is added to social knowledge when signalling some specific contexts that are otherwise connected with products of popular culture.

After Berger and Luckmann, many scholars have examined how various versions of reality and knowledge are constructed in different social and cultural contexts. Modern sociology of knowledge is predominantly interested in everyday life contexts, asking questions about common-sense interpretations of things and facts. Social knowledge emerges from and within the everyday: through social interaction, language use, socialization, and education. As certain practices are institutionalized, society becomes what its members perceive as "objective reality", which they then internalize to form various subjectivities according to social roles and positions.

Importantly, social knowledge begins with individual subjectivity, where meaning is created and where meaningful human action can occur (Schütz 1932). Through action and interaction, humans create "worlds of everyday life" (Schnettler, Knoblauch & Raab 2017:244) where shared patterns of understanding and interpretation emerge. When confronted with a routine social problem and forced to resolve it, repeating such patterns induces the process of institutionalization, establishing certain ways of responding to the problem. Patterns become habituated which eases the burden of having to

come up with new solutions and answers to the same issues. As these habituated patterns – now social institutions in the making – are transmitted, they become legitimized, or imbued with qualities of rationality, objectivity, and comprehensive symbolic relevance. School education is one place where social knowledge is ligitimized and participants acquire "entry keys" to the gates of the symbols and traditions relevant to their group, class, or nation. In other words, through social institutions, individuals acquire access to social stocks of knowledge: "meaning reservoirs that the subject encounters as something historically given and socially imposed – as a 'socio-historical a priori'" (Luckmann 1980, in Schnettler, Knoblauch & Raab 2017:248).

Social knowledge is crucial in forming identities and related "knowledges". The "sociality" of knowledge implies that emerging knowledges are ordered into different realms of experience in a society. In other words, knowledges are plural; they constitute "partial universes coexisting in a state of mutual accommodation" (Berger & Luckmann 1966:142), although they are held together by a higher-order symbolic totality taken for granted as such (Berger & Luckmann 1966:113). The collective "stocks of knowledge" – its symbolic building blocks – are generally available to all members of a society, and manifest themselves as "institutions (like language itself), theories and other socio-cognitive devices, organizations, archives, texts and all kinds of materialities (e.g. practices, artefacts)" (Keller 2005).

3.2.2 (MEDIATED) GEOPOLITICAL KNOWLEDGE

Geopolitical knowledge and its emanations have been approached through various lenses. Scholars of critical geopolitics have been concerned with the role of geographical knowledge in state power and the generalized "politics of knowledge, the production of [...] knowledge, and the epistemic underpinnings of 'knowing the world' and representing it geographically" (Moisio 2013:233). They analysed the historical developments of scholarly geopolitics and international political economy (O'Tuathail 1996; Agnew & Crobridge 1995), expert knowledges and geopolitical expertise producing spaces of power and influence, like the EU's expertise on its "neighbourhood" (Kuus 2011, 2014; Bialasiewicz 2011; Moisio et al. 2013), the operations of specialized knowledge within geopolitical assemblages (Dittmer 2017), knowledge regimes within diplomacy and foreign policy agencies producing discourses on the global "North", South" and "indigenous knowledges" (Gibson 2013; Woon 2013).

In this thesis, "geopolitical knowledge" is understood as one partial social universe containing meanings that in various ways refer to what people think of as "geopolitics". The focus is not on scholarly definitions of geopolitics, which often cannot be agreed upon by scholars themselves, but on everyday notions of geopolitics, their usage in communication, and its effects. For example, how do media personalities, politicians, or "ordinary" commenters use the notion of geopolitics to explain/legitimize a certain social or political

issue? How do geopolitics feature in the ideas of brotherhood between Poland or Serbia and various Caucasian nations? What does this tell us about popular understandings of and attitudes towards geopolitics?

Defined in this way, I examine geopolitical knowledge as a form of popular social knowledge, a "sum total of 'what everybody knows'" (Berger & Luckmann 1966:65) about the world of states and the power distribution between them. Geopolitics – and its definitions, usages, and meanings – form part of the social stocks of knowledge and are viewed through the lenses available to actors in a given society.

In the case studies, I discuss geopolitical knowledge about the Caucasus constructed by various actors for various aims – pointing to more general implications of its usage. The knowledge claims identified within the geopolitical discourses discussed are mediated in the sense defined by Livingstone (1999): they represent knowledge emerging in the context of media use. She underlines the importance of lay epistemology, captured here within a broader concept of "popular social knowledge".

Livingstone insists that the element of "newness" needs to be taken into account when knowledge claims are made in the context of media engagements. According to her, researchers interested in mediated knowledge always have to take into account not only the existent stocks of knowledge available to actors within a society, but also the "discovery of the new" through the negotiation of existent ideas and generation of new ones. This is especially important for a project interested in knowledge claims made in the media, and through the media, that concern remote and infrequently discussed regions, like the Caucasus.

3.3 INTERPLAY OF THE TWO THEORETICAL APPROACHES IN THIS DISSERTATION

As far as I am aware, the new sociology of knowledge and its specific method of discourse analysis (SKAD, outlined in Chapter 5), have not yet been applied in critical geopolitical analyses. It is therefore necessary to put this decision in context.

Most importantly, the choice to marry critical geopolitics with the new sociology of knowledge was conditioned by the nature of the empirical problem and made after my initial engagement with the brotherhood discourses that I was interested in. After performing what might be understood as the "pilot study" for this project (published as Article I), it became clear that the geopolitical imaginations of brotherhood and enmity between nations are forms of defining and addressing what is perceived as a problematic, unfavourable foreign policy situation in Poland and Serbia.

Namely, the case studies all describe various understandings of the Caucasus against the background of what the actors involved in the processes of "knowing the Caucasus" define as a problem, or a (geopolitical) issue to be

solved. The “geopolitical issues” and “geopolitical situation” encompass most essentially the countries’ perceived smallness and victimization in the world of states, which are analysed in detail in every article.

The media, politicians, and laypeople seem to address the Caucasus within a broader geopolitical situation that they perceive as problematic and respond to through discursive interventions. The specific Caucasus-centred discourses problematize the international situation of Poland and Serbia and propose a response to this perceived problem. The notions of problematization and definition of the situation, stemming originally from the scholarship of symbolic interactionism, form part of the sociology of knowledge tradition and provide an important lens through which to conceptualize the brotherhood discourses.

How individual and collective actors define their situation and what meanings they attach to it is played out in symbolic battles over their various interpretations of the world, definitions of problems to be tackled, attributions of responsibilities, and consequences of actions (Keller 2011:75). According to Blumer (1981:81) actions undertaken in relations to “things”, parts of both material and symbolic worlds, depend on the meanings actors attach to them. “Things” comprise not only material objects, but also abstract ideas, institutions, organizations, modes of acting, and activities (Keller 2012:114).

How the “things” and their meanings are worked out in public discourses is an important subject for scholars seeking to define and trace the careers of public problems (Gusfield 1981; Hilgartner & Bosk 1988; Schetsche 1996). Discursive definitions of public problems have been studied in various contexts including drunk driving (Gusfield 1981), waste management (Keller 1998; Viehöver 2000), climate (Viehöver 1997), mobilization of social movements (Gerhards 1992).

I believe that examining the discursive formulation and negotiation of social problems is a useful approach to the geopolitical situations and issues addressed in the brotherhood discourses. This approach seems reasonable especially as the speakers themselves often dress their geopolitical analyses and calls for Caucasus brotherhood as responses to pressing geopolitical problems of both Poland and Serbia. This perspective allows me to take the speakers and their conceptualization of international brotherhoods and friendships seriously, and provides methodological tools to analyse the various components of the “geopolitical situation” to which their discourses respond.

4 RESEARCH DESIGN

Each of the five articles in this thesis sheds light on geopolitical representation of the Caucasus in Poland and Serbia, the logics of brotherhood constructions, and the overall perception of geopolitics at various societal levels. The place of each article within the dissertation, problems addressed, and theoretical perspectives used are illustrated below.

Table 1 *The articles of this thesis: research problems, theoretical frameworks, and contributions.*

Article	Journal	Research problem	Theoretical framework	Contribution to the thesis
I. Brothers in Arms – Imagining a Meta-Historical Brotherhood of Georgia and Poland in Polish Media and Political Discourse.	*Journal for Discourse Studies (Zeitschrift für Diskursforschung)*	The emergence of a brotherhood discourse on Georgia in Poland	Bourdieu's concept of performativity; Fairclough's three-dimensional notion of discourse	Examines the emergence of the Polish–Georgian brotherly discourse and traces the linguistic means speakers use based on a small qualitative sample.
II. New History – the new ways of knowing and remembering the Caucasus in Poland.	*Central and Eastern European Review*	The linguistic and visual representation of the Polish–Georgian brotherhood	Kress and van Leeuwen's multimodal approach to discourse for visual images; Mink's geopolitics of memory and memory games	Reconstructs the memory politics, centring on its visual dimension, of Polish discourses on the Caucasus (Polish–Georgian friendship and Polish–Russian enmity).
III. "Exotic brotherhoods" in Serbian media discourses: the Caucasus.	*Present Scenarios of Media Production and Engagement, ECREA Researching and Teaching Communication Series*	The ideas of Serbian brotherhood with Caucasian nations	Foucauldian discourse studies; Berger and Luckmann's sociology of knowledge	Traces representation of the Caucasus in the Serbian media and discusses ideas of brotherhood between Serbs and various Caucasian nations.
IV. "With a little help from new friends"?: ideas of international brotherhood in post-Communist contexts.	*Europe-Asia Studies*	How do ideas of international brotherhood circulate in the media and beyond?	Critical geopolitics; Wallerstein's world systems (centre-periphery perspective)	Examines the emergence of common knowledge about regions and places on three communicative social levels: formal, practical, and everyday geopolitics.

V. "It is Krajina all over again": geopolitics of spite and online comments in a Serbian newspaper.	*Territory, Politics, Governance*	How do internet audiences negotiate geopolitical knowledge through online communication?	Critical geopolitics	Examines users' comments on a website of the Serbian newspaper *Politika*, theorizes the usefulness of treating geographical analogies as expressions of geopolitical emotion and the contextual approach to geopolitical imaginations.

4.1 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THIS THESIS' CONTRIBUTION

In the five articles comprising this dissertation, I address the place of the Caucasus region in geopolitical discourses in Poland and Serbia. I move from an initial focus on ideas of Polish–Georgian brotherhood to examine ways of paralleling geopolitical regions (Serbia/Armenia, the Balkans/the Caucasus).

In this way, I address important aspects of political and societal "uses of the Caucasus" in discourse. The level of practical geopolitics (foreign policy) is deeply intertwined with the media, particularly media representations of the political field and geopolitics (popular geopolitics). Much of the public discourse is articulated in the media, where brotherhood ideas are presented by intellectuals, often from the realm of academia (formal geopolitics). Simultaneously, media platforms provide audiences a ready-made space to formulate their responses to these political and intellectual discourses by commenting on and discussing the news, often on discussion boards.

To my knowledge, this is the first study of the Caucasus in geopolitical imaginations more generally in any of the CEE countries. So far, researchers have been scrutinizing media reporting about military and political crises emanating from the Caucasus. After the Russo–Georgian war, a stream of studies looked into the coverage of the war in the press of various Western countries and Russia, the representations of belligerents, and public discourses on the war (Domagała 2014a, 2014b; Heinrich & Tanaev 2009; Basilaia 2009; Gauseth 2012; Tønnessen & P. Kolstø 2012; Niedermaier 2008; Akhvlediani 2009; Eckler & Kalyango 2012; Nazarenko 2008; Muckenhuber 2009; Oganjanyan 2012; Pörzgen 2008; Nitsch & Lichtenstein 2013). Some interest arose in the information war between Georgia and Russia during and after the actual conflict (Jugaste 2011; Goble 2009; Deibert, Rohozinski & Crete-Mishihata 2012; Miszewski 2012). A valuable perspective on the interplay of media discourses and collective memory has been provided by Wertsch and Karumidze (2009).

The friend and foe imagery in relation to various nations of the Caucasus has been interrogated in studies of Abkhazian, Armenian, and Georgian media

and political discourse (Kvarchelia 2013; Hovhannisyan 2013; Khapava, Paverman & Gotua 2013; Baghdasaryan 2013; Dembinska 2013; Dale 1997; Garb 2009) as well as of the popular geopolitical beliefs of Azeris (Radnitz 2019). The discourse of special relations between Poland and Georgia has been commented upon in an analysis of travelogue books by Massaka (2019). Recently, commentators from outside academia (Budzisz 2019) have also taken up the issue, albeit with the explicit aim to complicate and destabilize the brotherhood discourses.

Researchers into geopolitical imaginations, visions, and narratives in Poland and Serbia have not taken up the role of the Caucasus. Only recently, Adamczewski (2019) used Leder's (2014) concept of the symbolical field to analyse Polish attitudes towards and myths about the Caucasus through history.

Studies have been concerned with geopolitical self-positioning of Serbia more generally (Savić 2014); the Serbian experience of place and its history as elements of geopolitical visions based on revenge fantasies (Dijkink 1996); Serbian national-cultural imaginaries, including geopolitical ideas (Živković 2001; Čolović 2000, 2008; Bjelić 2002); Serbia's foreign policy identity (Subotić 2011, 2013); the Polish Promethean geostrategy and the Caucasus within it (Ištok, Kozárová & Polačková 2018); the role of the Caucasus in Polish anti-Russian insurrection plans in the 19th century (Furier 2019); Polish geopolitical positioning in academic political geography (Solarz 2014; Sobczyński 2008); Polish foreign policy towards Europe's East and the Eastern Partnership, including Georgia (Parmentier 2009; Szczepanik 2011; Kuźniar 2009a, 2012; Vandecasteele, Bossuyt & Orbie 2017; Starzyk&Tomaszewska 2017); Polish–Georgian bilateral relations (Wojtasiewicz 2011; Gomółka & Borucińska-Dereszkiewicz 2015; Baluk 2009); Polish foreign policy response to the Russo–Georgian war (Lašas 2012; Ozierski 2012); Polish promotion of democracy and development aid in Georgia (Szent-Iványi & Végh 2018).

It would be impossible to address all the ways of representing the Caucasus that exist and all types of affective engagements that invoking this region elicits. For this reason, my articles focus on one especially interesting aspect of such representations, namely the brotherhood discourses that emerge with regard to the Caucasus. This choice enabled me to go deeper into the material and concentrate on the construction of international brotherhoods, a subject not often addressed in the social sciences nowadays. My thesis is thus a humble attempt to fill this lacuna.

Modern discourse studies and critical geopolitics alike are markedly concerned with "othering" understood as a prerequisite for identity construction (Dalby 1991; Said 1993; Diez 2004; Staszak 2009; Hall 2001; Lawless 2014). Sole concentration on strategies of othering overlooks the fact that "brothering", or political friendship-making, has power and potential to influence how people understand the (geo)political world around them. I ask

why and how the need for "brothering" occurs, even between the most unexpected places.

Naturally, friendship and brotherhood between nations cannot be considered in isolation; this relationship is accompanied by an element of constructing a "common enemy" shared by the fraternized nations. For this reason, in all the articles I discuss the construction of two enemies which play elaborate roles within the brotherly discourses: Russia and the West. Through detailed engagement with the logic of brothering of nations in the articles, I point to historical, social, and political roots of the emergence of geopolitical imaginations of international brotherhood and enmity in CEE.

4.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this thesis, I explore how geopolitical imaginations are formed in post-Communist contexts. The guiding question is: how do discourses on history and geopolitics structure, justify, and (de)ligitimate knowledge claims, especially claims that touch on friendships and enmities with other nations? How does knowledge about those nations emerge on three levels of geopolitics in society, and what are its building blocks?

Specifically, this thesis examines knowledge claims related to the nations of the Caucasus region and Russia. As explained earlier, the choice of the Caucasus was motivated by the sudden rise of popularity and presence of Georgia in the Polish public sphere around 2008. This popularity manifested itself in both foreign policy declarations and popular culture; the political vector was decidedly anti-Russian in orientation.

The examination of the Polish–Georgian brotherly discourse revealed its basis in knowledge claims about Polish–Russian history and Russia's role as archenemy and invader of Poland. Such images of and attitudes towards Russia are deeply entrenched in Poland.

The Serbian media and public sphere were chosen as a comparison to the Polish case because of similarly important and deeply entrenched ways of relating to Russia in Serbia, albeit with a positive vector. Russia, regarded in Serbia traditionally as a protector power, elicits strong associations and emotions; this study began as an exercise in searching for discourses and narratives centred on the Caucasus in the Serbian media and public sphere, on the assumption that, if found, they would in some way be connected to Russia. In both case studies, I examined ideas of brotherhood and enmity between nations: Poles and Serbs with respect to Russia and various nations of the Caucasus.

The detailed research questions posed and the answers provided in each article are summarized in the following table.

Table 2 *The articles of this thesis: summary of detailed research questions and conclusions.*

Article	Research Questions	Conclusions
I. Brothers in Arms – Imagining a Meta-Historical Brotherhood of Georgia and Poland in Polish Media and Political Discourse.	1. What discourses, ideas, and actors collaborated in the rise of Georgia's popularity in Polish media and public sphere around 2008? 2. How is history used to create an image of a brotherly nation of Georgia and what building blocks are chosen? 3. How does the Polish–Georgian brotherhood discourse fit into the dominant historical and national narratives in Poland?	Martyrological discourses on history, articulated largely by intellectual and foreign policy elites, legitimize the ideas of brotherhood. Elements of established symbolic "truths" governing Polish traditional understandings of the nation are used to frame new understandings of Georgia. Georgia is posited as a "natural" ally by virtue of its alleged shared history with Poland and similarities in "national characters".
II. New History – the new ways of knowing and remembering the Caucasus in Poland.	1. What does the popular knowledge of the Caucasus region in Poland consist of? 2. How do the visual, geopolitical, and historical elements interplay in the construction of popular social knowledge on the Caucasus in Poland? 3. How is the addition of the Georgian element into the mainstream Polish national history narrative legitimized through knowledge claims? 4. How does the Polish–Georgian brotherly discourse play out materially, what dispositifs does it set and how are they maintained?	Georgia's popularity in the media and public sphere was produced through "supplementing" the core symbolic events of the mainstream Polish historical narrative with a Georgian element. Visual images connoting significant events of the 20th cent. were used by politicians and their institutional infrastructures, the media, and media audiences alike. The Georgian brotherhood discourse forms part of a broader "Russian issue" constantly on the public agenda in Poland. Popular knowledge on the Caucasus amounts largely to knowledge of Georgia.
III. "Exotic brotherhoods" in Serbian media discourses:	1. How are ideas of international friendships between the Serbian and various Caucasian nations constructed in the media and public sphere?	The brotherhood discourses connecting Serbs with Armenians, Ossetians, and Abkhazians are framed as knowledge claims about their alleged shared history, shared ethnic cradles, and a fatalistic understanding of "historical forces"

the Caucasus.	3. How do international brotherhoods redefine the dominant understandings of national history and foreign policy in post-Communist contexts? 4. How do ideas of international brotherhood influence the understandings of Serbia's positioning on the global geopolitical plane?	victimizing small nations. The new brotherhoods supplant the old, lost, ones from before and after the Second World War. The discourses are characterized by historicization of the political sphere and diagnose a geopolitical marginalization of Serbia, to which they offer solutions.
IV. "With a little help from new friends"?: ideas of international brotherhood in post-Communist contexts.	1. How are geopolitical images circulating between the three social levels of geopolitics? 2. How does the authority of geopolitics as "objective science" underlie the ideas of the Polish–Georgian and Serbian–Caucasian brotherly connections? 3. What discursive strategies are used to construct the brotherly connections between nations and how do they influence the knowledge claims made by actors?	The brotherly ideas circulating between the fields of formal, popular, and practical geopolitics generally need an elite "commentariat" active in the media to stay afloat as part of a wider public discussion on geopolitics. All analysed ideas of brotherhood were promoted using the authority of geopolitics as science, appeals to historical victimization, and memory of past geopolitical agency.
V. "It is Krajina all over again": Geopolitics of Spite and Geographical Analogy in a Serbian Newspaper Audience.	1. How does a Serbian online newspaper audience negotiate geopolitical knowledge through online discussion boards? 2. How are geopolitical knowledge claims of Serbian–Russian brotherhood produced, sustained, and negotiated in a traditionally pro-Russian audience in view of Russia's contradictory international behaviour? 3. How do emotions factor in the production of geopolitical knowledge and how do they fuel geographical and historical analogies used by audiences?	Online comment boards provide a relatively free environment where users undergo little to no self-censorship, making them useful for critical geopolitical analysis. The pro-Russian audience manages to sustain the positive image of Russia through elaborate historical and geographical analogies, which simultaneously constitute expressions of emotion. The memory of international humiliation drives the emotional responses to Russia's contradictory international behaviour and underlies the audience's understandings of geopolitics.

5 METHODS AND MATERIALS

The phenomenon of brotherhood ideas between nations is treated here as a discursive phenomenon (see Section 2.4 on geopolitical discourses and Section 3.1 on critical geopolitics). Consequently, the data was subjected to discourse analysis. Nowadays, a plethora of discourse analytic approaches exist which cannot be described here due to lack of space. Good introductions to the field include Keller (2013), Jørgensen & Phillips (2002), and Titscher et al. (2000).

In the articles, I used two methods of qualitative discourse analysis. For the first article I used critical discourse analysis (CDA), in the tradition of Fairclough's work on language and its operations in society. In the remaining four articles, I took the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse (SKAD), which stems from the latest developments within qualitative sociology of knowledge. In the following, I describe both methodological approaches in more detail.

5.1 CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS (CDA)

CDA is a field of discourse studies interested in language's "involvement in the workings of contemporary capitalist societies" (Fairclough 2010:1) and, more broadly, in the complicated relationships between language and social structure. It considers language as a form of social practice. This inquiry is transdisciplinary, as its focus on language and communication cuts through disciplinary boundaries (Fairclough 2010:4); it started to develop in the 1970s (Fowler et al. 1979; Kress & Hodge 1979) and 1980s (Fairclough 1985, 1989), and gained popularity in sociology, political science, human geography, and all related social sciences.

In terms of theory, CDA draws on Foucauldian concept of discourses as practices that "systematically form objects of which they speak" (Foucault, 1972, p.54). As such, they have a strong potential to shape, change, or influence ideologies. Ideologies are understood as "representations of aspects of the world which contribute to establishing, changing and maintaining relations of power" (Fairclough 2004:9). This view has its roots in Althusser's understanding of ideologies as meaning systems that reproduce economic relations on a relatively autonomous social level; they are materialized in institutions, position actors within institutions, and compete with each other to reach a position of momentary dominance (Keller 2013:24) – understood as hegemony by Gramsci (2011).

Importantly, discursive hegemony is based on a negotiation of meaning between all social strata, those who possess power and those who do not, within which widely accepted common-sense notions and beliefs about the

word are produced. Consequently, hegemonic discourses are historical – they dominate in specific times and places. Through the concept of hegemony, the CDA is used to examine how discursive practices form part of the larger social field (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:76).

An important feature of CDA is its focus on various "social wrongs" (discrimination, racism, extremism etc.), understood as products of unequal power relations in society, and its attempt to better the social world through critique and "transform social forms and social life" through "political struggle" (Fairclough 2010:14). This normative aspect of CDA has been accentuated strongly by its main proponents (Fairclough 2010:11; Fairclough 1985; Scollon 2001:140; van Dijk 2001a:300; Titscher et al. 2000), which led to criticisms pointing to their certain lack of impartiality (Hammersley 1997; Verschueren 2001; Widdowson 1998; Stubbs 1997). I departed from this methodology partly because the focus on the need to change and improve the object of study seemed to interfere with the research process itself.

Within CDA, various strains accentuate different modes of approaching the relationship between language, texts, discourses, and society (Wodak 2001; Riesigl & Wodak 2009; Wodak et al. 2009; van Dijk 1991, 1993, 2000, 2001b; Hodge & Kress 1993). Fairclough's approach, used in this dissertation, focuses on social relations as facilitated by the use of language; discourse itself is seen as form of social relations (between communicating people, institutions etc.). Social relations are understood as dialectical: the complex interplay between (symbolic) power and language only reveals itself when one considers their effects as materialized, for example, in modern state institutions (where power is partly discursive, and discourses have real power effects; cf. Fairclough 2010:4f). This dialectical relationship is well captured in the idea that discourse should be understood as social practice:

> *CDA sees discourse – language use in speech and writing – as a form of "social practice". Describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s) which frame it: the discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them. That is, discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it.*
>
> *(Fairclough & Wodak 1997:258)*

CDA scholars use a multitude of tools of varying scope to analyse written, spoken, and visual texts. Their empirical methods stem from several theoretical traditions: epistemology, general social theories, micro- and macrolevel sociology, linguistics. and others (Wodak & Meyer 2009:24). All

operationalizations of CDA share the focus on language use and a hermeneutic approach to textual analysis (Wodak & Meyer 2009:28).

Fairclough's approach, used in Article I of this thesis, highlights the social aspect of language use as it draws on Halliday's (1994) systemic-functional linguistics, which sees language as shaped in all its aspects by its social uses.

In Article I, I operationalize CDA by focusing on two semantic aspects of the language used to talk about Georgia: overlexicalization and recontextualization, supplanted by Bourdieu's notion of the performativity of discourse. Overlexicalization and recontextualization are categories that describe representational meanings in clauses and texts, that is, how texts represent the world around us and establish orders and categories through which it is perceived.

Recontextualization is a strategy that places social events in the context of other, sometimes remote and unconnected, social events (Fairclough 2003:139), thus establishing causality or equivalence between them. In the Polish–Georgian brotherhood discourse, recontextualization is evident in the way Georgian historical events are represented as related to, corresponding with, analogical to, or resulting from other, largely unconnected events of Polish history. Cultural commonplaces and proverbs, like Polish–Hungarian friendship, are recontextualized by replacing the Hungarian with a Georgian component.

Overlexicalization refers to repetitions of certain sets of words, clauses, or propositions that lead to their fixation as the dominating lens through which social events are viewed. According to Machin and Mayr, "overlexicalization give a sense of over-persuasion and is normally evidence that something is problematic or of ideological contention" (2012:37). In the Polish–Georgian brotherhood discourse, overlexicalization is manifest in instances that speak of national victimization or struggle, or portray Russia's role in the history of both countries in a negative light (one of the most overlexicalized terms in the analysed sample was "blood", which connotes wars, conflict, and honourable death in defence of one's national sovereignty).

An important aspect of my methodological approach to CDA was the addition of Bourdieu's ideas on the performativity of discourse. The concept of performativity has gained popularity in studies of both language (Austin 1962; Cameron 1997; Hopper 1997; Pennycock 2004) and society (Butler 1990, 1997; Bourdieu 1991; Derrida 1988). It is applied in Article I in Bourdieu's classical understanding, where the symbolic power of certain utterances is not inherent in language itself, but rather stems from the social conditions of institutionalization that lend legitimacy to speakers and their utterances (Bourdieu 1991:75). In the case analysed in Article I, this institutional legitimation is most visible in the speeches of Poland's president that posit the existence of a Polish–Georgian brotherhood.

Article I was written and published before I chose to switch to another analysis paradigm, namely the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse (SKAD). This shift exemplifies the problems I experienced at the beginning of

the project and my search for methods that would enable a productive engagement with my materials. Most importantly, I believed that my chosen method should avoid imposing any “desired” reading on the materials. Applying critical discourse analysis (CDA), with its long tradition of progressive social critique, could result in a critique of nationalist or stereotyping strategies in the brotherhood discourses at the expense of capturing the entirety of various components involved in their production.

The main difference between Article I and the other articles is its focus on language, a feature typical for CDA. Already at this stage I felt the need to add Bourdieu’s perspectives on performativity; however, this did not yield a more nuanced explanation of the observed linguistic regularities in the Polish discourse on Georgia. The language-oriented analysis of Article I seemed not to fully capture the realities of fascination and support for Georgia in Poland. This fascination and support appeared to be a response to what were perceived as real and pressing problems “on the ground” rather than a symbolic performance for ideological gains.

For this reason, I chose to change my methodological focus for the rest of the project. In SKAD, the discourses and knowledges produced by actors are understood as responses to social problems. This perspective proved better suited to studying the building blocks of geopolitical imaginations. Geopolitics, since its inception, is largely about addressing problems of power distribution on Earth. The geopolitical focus of my thesis determined the choice of the new method to a large extent. To my surprise, SKAD had not been used in critical geopolitical studies before. This meant that my methodological choice required thorough justification (see Section 5.3). The usefulness of SKAD for critical geopolitics is also dealt with extensively in Article V.

5.2 VISUAL ANALYSIS

Article II of this dissertation makes use of images to showcase the materialization of ideas about Polish–Georgian brotherhood. While the overall analysis method in this article is SKAD (see Section 5.3), I worked with Kress’ and van Leeuwen’s toolkit for understanding visual communication (1996) when analysing visual material used in this case study.

Kress’ and van Leeuwen’s approach shares its roots with CDA, as they too base their approach in the systemic-functional linguistics of Halliday (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996:6), developing a “visual grammar”: a way of understanding the rules according to which elements in images are “combined into meaningful wholes” (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996:1). The visual grammar is understood as culture-specific, not universal; it constitutes a social resource that particular groups use to connote shared meanings.

In Article II, the postulated Polish–Georgian brotherly connection and its claim to historicity - which is achieved by actively incorporating the Georgian element into Poland’s mainstream history narrative - is used to show the

power of visual products generated within the brotherhood discourse. The images shown in the article exemplify the power of speakers to actualize shared symbolic resources in a society, shared stocks of knowledge possessed by speakers and readers alike.

This actualization may be achieved by various means. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (1996:79), “visual structures of representation can either be narrative, representing unfolding actions and events, processes of change, transitory spatial arrangements, or conceptual, representing participants in terms of their more generalized and more or less stable and timeless essence in terms of class, or structure, or meaning”. In Article II, I concentrate on processes of representation that operate on the principle of creating equivalence between “essences” of the Polish and Georgian nations, classifying them as members of the same conceptual category.

To this end, I show examples of images that build taxonomies of “species of the same genus”, with Polish and Georgian interwar officers posing as representatives of a general category of honourable soldiers fighting for Poland’s freedom; Polish and Georgian politicians on posters standing next to each other in symmetrical formations; Polish and Georgian flags blending into each other.

Article II does not engage in a detailed analysis of images according to the multitude of elements and vantage points provided in van Leeuwen’s and Kress’ visual semiotic framework. Instead, it uses the visual communication of the Polish–Georgian brotherly idea as a means of showcasing the wider logic of historicizing and structuring widely known historical events according to the logics of the brotherly discourse.

For the detailed analysis of the Polish discourse on Georgia and the Caucasus in Article II, the SKAD framework is used, which is described in the following section.

5.3 SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE APPROACH TO DISCOURSE (SKAD)

SKAD is an approach to understanding discourses developed within the framework of the new sociology of knowledge, based on three theoretical traditions: symbolic interactionism (Mead 1934/1972), the social constructivist tradition of the sociology of knowledge (Schütz 1971, 1973; Schütz & Luckmann 1979, 1984) and Foucauldian discourse studies (1971, 1972, 1991). Proponents of SKAD understand it as a mediation of Foucault’s concepts of discourse through Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) sociology of knowledge. Seeing SKAD as a “translation between the languages of theory”, they try to apply ideas and suggestions found in Foucault within the field of sociology of knowledge and thus contribute towards theory building in hermeneutic sociology (Keller 2011:13f).

In this dissertation, I do not have such ambitious goals; instead, I choose SKAD as the methodological tool best suited to address questions about negotiation of geopolitical knowledge within specific brotherhood discourses. Central for my dissertation's modest endeavour is the concept of discourse: SKAD provides the social scientists with the tools to analyse this.

In SKAD, discourse is defined as a "complex of statements and practices anchored therein, which are connected through structural contexts that can be reconstructed and that are used to process various orders of reality" (Keller 2011:235). This definition could be simplified to Foucault's notion of discourse as "regulated, structured practices of sign usage" that manifests itself in concrete, often material, practices; institutional structures; objects; and texts (Keller 2011b:51). People develop competence in sign usage during socialization, in which communication plays a decisive role. This understanding goes hand in hand with Mead's symbolic interactionism, which postulated the primacy of communication in socialization processes and in the development of individual consciousness, capable of using signs according to socially established rules.

The social rules of sign usage, from this perspective, are not fully predetermined, as the existence of individual consciousness always allows for interpretation. The "more or less solidly fixed" signs and knowledge are actualized in utterances, in practical usage (Keller 2011b:50f). The certain "freedom of interpretation" makes it possible to attribute an important role to actors that speak within discourses, e.g. media audiences. The existence of counter-discourses and the constant negotiation of meaning around social issues are testament to that. Discourses can, therefore, be seen as attempts to freeze certain meanings (Keller 2011b:51) and establish them as momentary truths in social arenas.

SKAD users' main interest lies in the politics of knowledge and the definition of such truths in modern societies; they operate at the intersection of micro- and macro-sociological perspectives, conducting empirical research on the forms and effects of social processes by which problems are defined and knowledge negotiated – the "discursive construction of reality" (Keller 2011:17). True to its roots in the qualitative sociology of knowledge, SKAD researchers aim to understand the concrete actions of people in society; their studies have an empirical focus (Reichertz 2013:2). In my case, this means concrete discursive strategies for establishing a notion of brotherhood between Polish/Serbian and Caucasian nations.

The main premise of SKAD is that the world cannot be accessed *per se*, but is mediated through socially constructed and typified knowledge, including schemata of meaning, its interpretations, actions, and symbols (Keller 2013:61). The geopolitical knowledge I analyse in this dissertation is one way of accessing the world's complexity; importantly, it does not refer only to abstract political interpretations, but cuts through very real and material, even bodily, perceptions of shame, emotional suffering, hope, and joy (exemplified most specifically in Article V).

Central to SKAD is an interest in the production and circulation of knowledge across various social fields and arenas. These include institutions, sciences, media, and the public domain. Discourses are forms of knowledge structuration and are understood as “analytically definable ensembles of practices and meaning attributions” (Keller 2013:63). In this view, similarly to CDA, discourses enter into dialectical relationship as wider entities, collections of typified claims about the world, and their individual actualizations. Particular claims within a discourse are simultaneously structured by past processes and structuring with respect to the future development of the discourse and its elements (Giddens 1986; Keller 2013:64).

Understanding discourses as means of typifying knowledge has its roots in the work of Foucault, whose “sociology of knowledge is represented in the search for the concept that will show how certain practices [...] vary, revealing the effects of power” and in “introducing the material and political forces that shape and are sedimented in the structures of knowledge” (Manning 1982:65, in Keller 2012:52). In the 1990s, Hall (1997:4) also argued for a knowledge-oriented notion of discourse, which he defined as “ways of referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic of practice: a cluster (or formation) of ideas, images and practices” (Keller 2012:55).

Scholars who use SKAD as their main methodology, myself included, most commonly work with Berger’s and Luckmann’s conceptualization of “common-sense knowledge” (see Chapter 3). To distil the elements of common-sense understandings of brotherhood with (nations of) the Caucasus, I adapt Keller’s concept of phenomenal structure. Articles II–V present the findings of the case studies as dimensions of the problems addressed in the respective discourses, illustrated by tables showcasing the reconstructed phenomenal structure of each brotherly discourse.

The concept of phenomenal structure (*Phänomenstruktur*) refers to the ways in which discourses, in the process of establishing their “theme”, relate to, name, and define various aspects of reality, combining them into distinguishable “phenomena” and designating them as issues or problems (Keller 2013:114). This concept goes back to Karl Mannheim’s *Aspektstruktur* (aspectual structure, also translated as thought style or thought system) which described how facts are named and selected as representative of a particular phenomenon (Keller 2011:248). Mannheim’s aspectual structure can be ascribed to a particular social group or historical epoch and manifests itself in its conceptual apparatus, dominant theories and ways of thinking, and levels of abstraction (Kozyr-Kowalski 1967:122). In short, it “signifies the manner in which one views an object, what one perceives in it, and how one construes it in one’s thinking” (Mannheim 1946:244).

Importantly, a phenomenal structure of a particular discourse has to be abstracted based on actual texts or other materials and cannot be known in advance. Individual instances of data typically contain partial elements of the phenomenal structure (Keller 2013:115); consequently, only a deep

engagement with the data set enables analysts to abstract higher-order categories and generalizable elements of the structure.

During the process of abstracting the phenomenal structure, the data are coded and particular utterances designated as representative of wider categories. Data coding in this analysis was open and theoretical, in accordance with grounded theory: "specifying a category (phenomenon) in terms of the conditions that give rise to it; the context [...] in which it is embedded; the action/interactional strategies by which it is handled, managed, carried out; and the consequences of these strategies" (Strauss & Corbin 1990:97). Rather than imposing categories on the data, I first thoroughly explored the material. As is characteristic for grounded theory procedures, data gathering and analysis run in parallel (Thornberg & Charmaz 2014:155); I was gathering data for the whole duration of the project and my understanding of them grew with every case study.

In articles II–V, the process of abstracting the phenomenal structure was regulated by the subject matter: geopolitics and the ways it is viewed within the Caucasus brotherhood discourses. The abstracted categories included defining a problem that the geopolitical discourses of brotherhood address; the attribution of causes, suggested solutions, and responsibility; the values speakers represented and advocated for; and the knowledge struggles, or competing ideas that speakers debated as possible solutions to problems. The components of the phenomenal structure differ slightly for every case study, as they depended on the research questions and the respective interpretative focus of the articles.

Another important concept in SKAD analysis is the dispositif of discourse, discussed in articles II, III, and IV. In short, dispositifs of a discourse include its ideational and material infrastructure, such as buildings (museums, meeting places, clubs), societies, codes of conduct, or technologies. Dispositifs serve to institutionalize a discourse (Keller 2011:259).

Examples of dispositifs of the Caucasus brotherhood discourses include international friendship societies in Serbia (e.g. Serbian–Armenian friendship association; organizations of the Armenian diaspora), the travel infrastructure of the Polish–Georgian charter plane connections in the summer, and the material infrastructure of Georgia-related film and culture festivals in Poland. Those and other dispositifs, or lack thereof, play an important role in discussions of the brotherly discourses in the articles of this dissertation.

The following table contains a detailed list of methods used in each article and the composition of the data/materials analysed in each case study.

Table 3 *The articles of this thesis: methods and analysed materials.*

Article	Methods	Data
I. Brothers in Arms – Imagining a Meta-Historical Brotherhood of Georgia and Poland in Polish Media and Political Discourse.	CDA: recontextualization and overlexicalization	14 articles from Polish newspapers and the blogosphere selected by purposive sampling.
II. New History – the new ways of knowing and remembering the Caucasus in Poland.	SKAD Visual analysis	250 randomly sampled materials from a database created by the author, containing: 641 press articles 1994–2018, including extra samples from newspapers of record *Polityka* (331), *Gazeta Wyborcza* (108) and the elite monthly dedicated to post-Soviet space, *Nowa Europa Wschodnia*; 12 books and brochures; four interviews; 12 radio and TV productions, including user-produced YouTube videos. Analysed materials cover the time period 2007–2016, with the rest of the database serving as background.
III. "Exotic brotherhoods" in Serbian media discourses: the Caucasus.	SKAD	250 randomly sampled materials from a database created by the author, containing: 282 press articles 1988–2018, 13 books and brochures, 237 articles from the newspaper of record *Politika* in August 2008 (Russo–Georgian war), 166 articles from *Politika* in March 2014 (annexation of Crimea), nine radio and TV productions, eight interviews, 150 *Politika* articles from the 1990s and 61 from 1988 (international friendships and Balkan–Caucasus analogies). Analysed materials cover the time period 2007–2016, with the rest of the database serving as background.
IV. "With a little help from new friends"?: ideas of international brotherhood in post-Communist contexts.	SKAD	50 Polish and 50 Serbian randomly selected media instances, analysed in the context of the two databases (Polish and Serbian) mentioned above (1988-2018).
V. "It is Krajina all over again": geopolitics of spite and online comments in a Serbian newspaper.	SKAD	720 user comments from August 2008 (set A) and 1560 user comments from March 2014 (set B), sampled from the online discussion board of a newspaper of record, *Politika*. Analysed comment threads contain over 50 comments, with an additional 100 random comments from shorter threads for each of the two sets.

6 INTRODUCTION TO THE ARTICLES

The five articles of this thesis all address various but interconnected aspects of geopolitical representations of the Caucasus in Poland and Serbia. Due to the research process of an article-based PhD, the focus of my project has been slightly changing with every article. The database grew with time, enabling me to interact with the materials in deeper, more diversified way, facilitating the process of "interpretative analytics" (Keller 2012:72). The longer my interaction with the studied material was, the more curious I became, not only about the representation of the Caucasus *per se*, but also more generally about the construction of ideas of brotherhood and friendship between nations. I realized that it was necessary to look for nuanced ways of approaching people's needs to perceive a remote place as a "friend", and decided to change my focus from media representations, which were my main interest at first (articles I, II, III) to the politics of geopolitical emotion at their most mundane level, as articulated by "ordinary" commenters on an online newspaper comment board (Article V). Article IV is an attempt at combining the perspectives taken and levels of geopolitics examined during the project. In it, I discuss the flow of ideas about Caucasus-related brotherhood between three social levels: the practical (foreign policy), the formal (to which I include intellectual elites and their engagements in the media) and the popular (everyday perceptions of "ordinary people").

In the following, I briefly discuss the contents of all five articles, their position within the overall framework of the dissertation and their contribution to the research project.

Article I: Brothers in Arms – Imagining a Meta-Historical Brotherhood of Georgia and Poland in Polish Media and Political Discourse.

This article was prepared in the initial phase of my work, largely as a "pilot study" to orientate myself in the workings of the Polish–Georgian brotherhood discourse. It is the only article of the project in which I use critical discourse analysis. In it, I discuss the sudden emergence and rise in popularity of Georgia in Polish media and public discourse in 2008, around the time of the Russo–Georgian five-day war. From a large database of Polish textual and visual material on Georgia which I gathered from the internet, I selected 14 texts for detailed qualitative examination. The various political orientations of these texts – news items and blog posts – are taken into account, adding generalizability to the findings. My qualitative CDA makes use of Bourdieu's ideas on the performativity of discourse. Article I suggests that the agency of "practical geopoliticians" to set ideas of brotherhood and friendship between nations can be understood as a discursive performative practice: linguistic choices made by speakers have an almost immediate effect on the social,

producing what they apparently designate (Bourdieu 1991). That is especially the case if those choices draw on symbolic stocks of knowledge available to people through socialization, as is the case with national historical narratives.

Article II: New History – the new ways of knowing and remembering the Caucasus in Poland.

In this article, I examine the building blocks of the ideas about Polish–Georgian brotherhood and friendship more thoroughly. Using a larger data set, including books, blog posts, newspaper articles, logos, and posters, I discuss the formal, practical and popular aspects of negotiating geopolitical knowledge about the Caucasus and Russia. The discussion addresses Polish memory politics and how the Caucasus is "added" to popular narratives of suffering under the Russian yoke and the fight against Russia. Focusing on the visual dimensions of the Polish–Georgian brotherly discourse, I show how the visual symbols associated with important historic events can be recycled to serve new narratives, feeding new geopolitical imaginations, but utilizing historical representations that are largely well-known and available to the public. I discuss three key examples: the focus in Polish–Georgian brotherly discourse on the "Georgian episode" in the history of the pre-war Polish Army, which took in émigré Georgian military officers after the Soviet capture of Georgia in 1921; the repurposing of visual symbols of anti-Communist opposition (the Solidarity movement); and the fascination with symbols of the early modern Polish statehood (Sarmatism).

Article III: "Exotic brotherhoods" in Serbian media discourses: the Caucasus.

In this article, I move to focus on Serbia and examine the unexpected way of relating to various Caucasian nations which I found in my database of materials gathered from Serbian newspapers and internet. This friendship discourse builds various connections and analogies between the Serbs and the Armenians, Abkhazians, and Ossetians. Such analogies, which I labelled "exotic brotherhoods", seem to be an interesting addition to the established idea of a historical Serbian–Russian brotherhood. I suggest that these analogies operate on the principle of "genocidal paralleling" not unknown in previous Serbian popular understandings of history. The ephemerality and relative unstableness of "exotic brotherhoods" in the Serbian media and public sphere is explained through the lack of a powerful political agency that would have serialized discursive events more strongly. Such serialization could allow an established discourse to emerge. Without it, the brotherly claims appear to be additions to the dominant idea of Serbian–Russian brotherhood and friendship, which has a well-established societal and political footing.

Article IV: “With a little help from new friends”?: ideas of international brotherhood in post-Communist contexts.

This article is an attempt to bring together the above three discourses by comparing the circulation of ideas about “exotic brotherhoods”. In it, I place the common knowledge of Polish–Georgian, Serbian-Armenian and Serbian-Ossetian “connections” in the context of the politics of memory in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989. Concurring with Guzzini’s analysis, I find that the sudden abandonment of established foreign policy vectors in CEE after the fall of Communism led to a search for new foreign policy certainties. These were found in the authority of geopolitics as objective science and return to historically established traditions of geostrategic thinking from before the Second World War in both Poland and Serbia. I trace the flow of brotherly ideas between the three social levels of geopolitics in Poland, Serbia and the Republic of Srpska (the Serbian entity within Bosnia and Hercegovina) and attempt to explain the observed differences between the Polish and Serbian geopolitical representations of the Caucasus. I consider agency on the practical, formal and popular levels of geopolitics and point to how ideas circulate differently between these levels in the three countries.

Article V: “It is Krajina all over again”: geopolitics of spite and geographical analogy in a Serbian newspaper audience.

In this article, I examine the formation and negotiation of geopolitical knowledge in online communication: specifically, readers’ comments on the online discussion board of *Politika*, a Serbian newspaper of record with a clear pro-Russian leaning. The readers are understood as an active audience and their emotional engagement with geopolitics is analysed based on the historical and geographical analogies they form between Serbia, the Caucasus, and Crimea. I attempt to explain the pervasiveness of the Serbian–Russian brotherly discourse in view of the Russia’s contradictory behaviour in its foreign policy, supporting Serbia’s territorial integrity while undermining that of Georgia and Ukraine. I engage with the audience’s emotional investments in the perceived world of geopolitics and persistent popular interest in the notions of “national character traits” used to explain the categorization of nations along a scale of friendships and geographical/historical/spiritual “closeness”.

7 CONCLUSION

Concepts of international brotherhood that connect Poland and Serbia to the Caucasus have been traced in this dissertation. Careful analysis of such concepts reveals the formation of "geopolitical knowledge", operating on three levels of agency in the social world: formal, practical, and popular geopolitics. The "knowledge" analysed in this project is understood holistically in the tradition of Berger and Luckmann (1966), as a collection of ideas, notions, and emotional prompts available to actors from particular cultural and national backgrounds (their stocks of knowledge), used as tools to explain the political world of states they inhabit. Due to the Caucasus' history of belonging to the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, analysing the role of the Caucasus in brotherhood narratives enabled closer examination of the use of Russia as a symbolic resource in Poland and Serbia.

The five articles comprising the thesis revealed important similarities in the structure and logics, but also significant differences in reach and circulation between Polish and Serbian Caucasus brotherhood discourses. In the following, I first discuss the similarities, move on to differences, and finish with implications for our understanding of the politics of history and geopolitical imaginations in the post-Communist realm.

The most important similarity in the Polish and Serbian brotherhood discourses is their treatment and understanding of history. In both cases, national history is reworked and recontextualized to accommodate new protagonists from the Caucasus and enable a logical connection between "us" and "our Caucasian brothers". History is viewed through a fatalistic lens as a force victimizing small nations; the brotherhoods seem to offer a form of "historical self-defence", a way to discursively regain a control over one's history lost due to the actions of great powers. This understanding of history and its role in the victimization of one's nation is discussed in detail in articles 2, 3, and 4.

Against this background, brotherhood discourses can be understood as tools for ordering history anew to underscore newly found geopolitical agency. Memories of bygone geopolitical visions, like Promethean geostrategy in Poland which structured the country's interwar foreign policy or the non-aligned policies of Yugoslavia which secured that state's continued international relevance, are crucial for establishing brotherhood discourses. The Caucasus, as an object of geopolitical analysis, is "written into" historical narratives of suffering and victimization and reworked into an element of memories of past geopolitical agency, which has now been lost and needs to be recovered.

Proponents of both Polish and Serbian brotherhood discourses emphasize the need to revive "neglected" and forgotten histories. The history of Polish–Georgian relations is a case in point, given that professional historians and

their academic infrastructures were heavily involved in establishing ideas of brotherhood (analysed in Article II). In the Serbian case, claims concerning "common history" concentrate on historical analogies, analysed in articles III and V. More farfetched ideas about a common ethnic cradle of the Serbian and Caucasian nations were also observable in the analysed materials.

Russia constitutes an important nodal point for both Polish and Serbian visions of the Caucasus. It often appears as their ultimate reference point, without which the friendship and brotherhood discourses would lose much of their appeal. The vectors of sentimental allegiance differ in Poland and Serbia, as the Polish–Georgian brotherhood is set as a defence against a common enemy and the Serbian "exotic brotherhoods" with the Caucasus as a symbolic push towards the Russian sphere of interest. Nonetheless, the logics of the allegiances, which set a "friend and foe matrix" on which to order one's own and other nations, remains constant in both cases.

However much Russia figures as the ultimate referent for the brotherly ideas, it is important to note that strong, personal emotional attachments transcend the need to interpret the Caucasus through its proximity to Russia. As the brotherhood discourses stabilize and form collections of ideas that become available to audiences interested in geopolitics, the Caucasus, or both as stocks of specialized knowledge (SKAD's "special discourses"), emotional attachments to the region appear to lack the need for the ultimate Russian referent. This is obvious when one considers the deep engagement of Poles travelling to the Caucasus via various NGO projects and blogging about their experiences. It was also tangible during my interviews in Serbia, where the interest in cultural commonalities between the Serbs and Armenians, and personal experiences of contact with representatives of the Armenian diaspora, fuel emotional attachments that transcend the need for a strictly geopolitical rationale of the postulated brotherhood between nations.

An important difference between Caucasus brotherhood discourses in Poland and Serbia is their actual reach and material effects, analysed in Article IV. In Poland, Polish–Georgian friendship and geostrategic partnership were strongly promoted at all three social levels of geopolitics: by the highest echelons of political power, echoed by the media, and reproduced through manifold citizens' organizations and events. This was not the case with the Serbian "exotic brotherhoods": that brotherly discourse is limited to elite conservative intellectual activity in the media, with a small number of professional publications framed as geopolitical analyses, and a popular realm of "everyday geopolitical analysts" active on the internet. Popular audiences draw from both the geostrategic thinking presented in the media and the fantasies of the "Caucasian cradle" of the Serbs as imagined by the "Serbian Historical Autochthonous School".

These differences account for the great difference in reach of the brotherly ideas between the two countries. Whereas common knowledge has it nowadays that Poland and Georgia are "friends" and the idea is immediately recognizable in casual conversations about the Caucasus, the self-evidence of

the analogical discourses in Serbia is limited to circles that are engaged in promoting Serbian–Russian connections with the Caucasus extension, care about cultural exchange between the regions, or are otherwise personally invested in reviving "neglected history". During my interviews with academic historians and political scientists in Serbia, the idea was recognizable as geopolitical imagination coming from right-wing conservative circles; interviews with non-professionals revealed other important elements of the perceived brotherliness and closeness, including religious commonalities, Orthodox values, and personal experiences with the Armenian diaspora.

The implications of the brotherhood discourses for our understanding of the politics of history and the operations of geopolitical imagination in the post-Communist space are twofold. Firstly, it is important to realize that the "return of geopolitics" (Guzzini 2012) to the region not only reached foreign policy elites, but encompassed also the media and the most mundane level of "personal" geopolitical imaginations, producing unexpected allegiances and emotional investments in regions which were absent from public discourses and the popular imagination during the Communist period. This points to an obvious void that needed to be filled in a region that entered a period of systemic transformation in the 1990s.

The fact that these brotherly discourses emerged only after much of this transformation had been completed by 2008, suggests the lack of satisfaction with the peripheral realities of both analysed countries in parts of the political, media, and public spheres and the need to search for new geopolitical visions. The new visions, including brotherhood discourses, are rooted in pre-Communist history and offer ways of understanding the geopolitical position of one's own state that boosts national self-esteem and connects to a wider community of shared histories, no matter whether real or imagined.

Secondly, the appeal of geopolitics as an "objective science" is evident to politicians, media, and popular audiences alike. At all the analysed levels of geopolitical practice, actors make use of the traditional geopolitical claims to objectivity, which enable them to shape their postulates and analyses as scientifically grounded, or alternatively self-evident; as policy advice to be followed. The world as depicted in the analysed materials is understood in terms of crude power rivalries, where the surface of the Earth seems a chess-board or poker table whose fate is decided by any power who manages to win the "geopolitical game". Because the brotherhood discourses define the geopolitical predicament of Poland and Serbia as "smallness" and marginalization in the world of states, and the fatalistic understanding of historical trajectories that led to such current position, the most obvious remedy would be to bandwagon with one of the great powers, either the USA or Russia. Although such ideas are present in both brotherhood discourses, there is also a strong push towards establishing, or re-discovering, one's own lost geopolitical agency. Understood in this way, the brotherly ideas provide a way out of the feelings of national humiliation or disillusionment with the international position of one's state.

The prominence of the pre-Communist past within ideas of exotic brotherhood signals their role in a wider alliance of discourses that espouse blank condemnation of the Communist period. Such condemnation, coupled with deep dissatisfaction with the economic and social realities of systemic transformation and, in the Serbian case, war, produces feelings of despair and disillusionment that fuel the search for new alliances. The fact that the "new friends" described in this dissertation come from equally (or more) disadvantaged and historically troubled contexts, seems to reinforce and facilitate the emergence of small or politically dependent states "onto the scene of their own history". The processes typical for this kind of politics of history in the post-Communist sphere have been brilliantly analysed by Astrov (2012) on the level of foreign policy elites. He suggests that this politics stems from a search of new "ontological securities" in the troubled region. This seems to be true also for popular geopolitical narratives, as this research exemplifies.

Similar processes of reinterpreting history can be observed in Russia, where geopolitics has become a respected science and aid to statecraft in the highest echelons of political power, exemplified by the rise of Aleksandr Dugin and his "fourth political theory". This New Eurasianism is rooted in pre-war, emigrant Russian Eurasianist thought. Thinking in terms of civilizations composed of kindred peoples[14], connected by the same civilizational "spirit" due to a shared history of ethnic differentiation under similar climatic and geographical pressures, has a lot in common with the ideas of "shared national spirit" espoused within the brotherly discourses analysed in this dissertation. Although Putin has called the dissolution of the Soviet Union "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe" of the 20th century, the new Russian geopolitical thought recycles ideas from outside the Soviet symbolic realm. This happens both on the formal and practical levels of geopolitics (Morozova 2011) as well as in the popular realm of audience receptions (Suslov 2014).

In sum, the Caucasus brotherhoods analysed in this dissertation provide important insights into the ordering of history and production of geopolitical knowledge in post-Communist contexts. The conflation of history and geopolitics; historical and geographical analogies drawn between one's own country, the Caucasus and Russia; and the prominent role that references to geopolitics as a science play in the formation of brotherly ideas all point to and connect with unresolved struggles over interpretation of the 20th-century histories in both Poland and Serbia.

As an attempt to establish new historical interpretations, to "fight" against historical neglect, to find brothers and friends to join in such struggles, brotherhood discourses constitute important – if often overlooked – interventions into popular understandings of nation, "national character", and bonds between nations. Although such subjects are nowadays largely analysed with the aim of deconstruction and demystification, the strength of

[14] Civilizational thinking also has its stable place in the West, as exemplified by Huntington's ideas on the "clash of civilizations".

sentimental attachment revealed in my research implies they should be taken more seriously. More research is needed into the emergence of ideas of international brotherhood, their careers in the public sphere, circulation in the media and use by politicians, academics, and media audiences.

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