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A History of the World, Part 1: Using the Narrative Policy Framework
as a Tool to Understand International Relations

by
Alden Allen

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To the Graduate Faculty:

The members of the committee appointed to examine the thesis of ALDEN ALLEN find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

Dr. Donna Lybecker, Major Advisor

Dr. Mark McBeth, Committee Member

Dr. James DiSanza, Graduate Faculty Representative

Dedication

To my deepest love, my darling Necoline,
Who believed in me, even in my darkest times.

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Abstract

Narratives are a powerful tool that helps guide the human experience. Their effect on international relations is a less-studied area which needs to be understood by scholars. This thesis uses the Narrative Policy Framework as a tool to examine these narratives by shifting the framework to better function at the international level with some redefinition that incorporates IR theory with the core concepts of the policy understanding. A case study using the Narrative Policy Framework combined with discourse networks is used to examine narratives that are used within the Georgian-Abkhazian War of 1992-93. The focus is on narratives in English used by the participants within the United Nations.

Keywords: Narratives, Discourse Network Analysis, Narrative Policy Framework, International Relations, Strategic Narrative, Georgia, Abkhazia, United Nations, Policy Narratives, Conflict, Security Council

All the world's a stage,
 And all the men and women merely players;
 - Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, Act II, Scene VII

Introduction

International relations in the era of instantaneous communication seems to be founded on chaos. It is not surprising, given the lack of any overarching hierarchy that guides the interactions of nation-states on Earth. Add in the ability to exchange media and ideas from one country to another in seconds, and what seems to be once relegated to elites and dignitaries begins to filter out to any individual with a cellular phone and connection to the global network.

This unprecedented access to the global community means that there is less of a vacuum for international relations scholars to live in; no questioning and guessing the inner workings that produce foreign policy. What was once limited to understandings of sovereignty and interactions among nation-states has evolved into attempting to make sense of the interaction of the seven billion people forming their opinions about events in a global civil society, regardless of their ability to impact the outcome. For every person, there is a different interpretation of the event, based on the facts presented to the individual, as well as the acceptance of the facts as being facts in and of themselves. Events, responses to events, discussion...all of it takes place on the grand, global stage made by humanity, the players.

International relations consist of the study of the players upon the stage, but where is the discussion about the narrative that the players are espousing? Words often accompany the actions upon the stage, giving meaning and interpretation to the action. These words are hidden within the policy realm as countries, elites, and non-state actors interact with each other in the broadest sense. It must be teased out from the words and deeds taking place upon the stage. It, then, is the job of the international relations scholar to turn up the lights, strip back the scenery, and understand the play itself that is being performed.

This is the crux of this thesis; to explore the play taking place on the world stage. Or better yet, to identify the narratives that push policy and drive interaction between all the players. However, a scholar is only as great as their tools, which in the case of international relations, is sorely lacking for examining narrative. This highlights the overarching research question that will be answered within this thesis:

How are narratives processed and handled within international relations, especially within international *fora*, like the United Nations?

To understand this question, this thesis will explore why narratives are so important to international relations. It will also review attempts to propose frameworks for analysis, that, while well informed from political communications literature and international relations scholarship, contain gaps. This thesis will then introduce a tool to assist in narrative analysis. It will finally conclude with a case study that implements the tool to analyze the narratives processes within the United Nations.

The Power of Narratives

It is obvious that narratives, especially policy narratives, exist in international relations in a variety of arenas. Public diplomacy between nation-states; announcements of responsibility for terrorist attacks; even the over-aggressive posturing of dictators vying for international screen-time; all are formed around telling a particular story for an audience. They are actors putting on a play for the audience to receive. Just like the actors, that audience takes many forms. It might be the interior nation of the nation-state; it might be elites in separate nations, or it might be

addressing groupings of nation-states in an international forum like the United Nations. These groups all have one thing in common: their humanity. And humanity loves stories.

Since the dawn of language, humanity has used stories to make sense of the world around them, with sources pointing to the existence of non-verbal symbolic structures dating back 300,000 years (Scalise Sugiyama, 2011). Storytelling and narratives are so important to human development, that it is hypothesized that early foraging societies used it to teach essential skills between generations (Scalise Sugiyama, 2011). Narratives pervade every culture, from the oral traditions of the South Pacific to the fairy tales of the European continent to traditional shadow puppet plays in China (Choi, 2015); stories are everywhere. Stories are used to communicate ideas between parent and child, giving the ability to survive. As political psychologists Hammack and Pilecki (2012) ascertain, narratives are the link between the mind and society. Unsurprisingly, because of this necessity of a storytelling tradition in all cultures, narrative has power over human thought that has not been eclipsed by the rationalist model of interpretation presented in the 1950s.

Humans fully use narratives at least as much as rationalist thought to make sense of the world around them; indeed, as Jones (2014) found, narrative treatments have at least as much propensity for conveying policy information as direct facts. However, Jones (2014) also found that support for policy narratives increases along with the narrative transportation felt. Therefore, while facts may be equal to narrative, the emotional pull on decision-making is strengthened by the narrative in and of itself. Given this, a singularly rationalist strategy of understanding international relations is bound to fail, leading away from the strict positivism of realist and liberal theory, or their neo- interpretations. To understand the relations of the countries, we must understand narrative.

Much work in understanding narrative has been performed within the policy sphere, providing insight into the psychological fundamentals that produce political thought and action. Shanahan, Jones, McBeth, and Radaelli (2017) establish the idea of *homo narrans*, the profile of human as narrative creatures, elucidating ten dictates in which this operates. To fully best understand narrative though, it is important to understand these points and how they affect international relations. For a full discussion of the research made in the basic statements, please see Shanahan, et al. (2017).

1. *Humans are boundedly rational.* We make decisions with limited time and limited information. Because of the global nature of international relations, what happens in one day could fill thousands of volumes. Those actors who participate in this global play must attempt to condense this information and make decisions. Realist theory would agree to these power constraints on information, especially during times of conflict, with action occurring in limited interests (Morgenthau & Thompson, 1985).
2. *Humans use heuristics to shortcut information.* Because international actors are boundedly rational, even as a nation-state, actors must rely on shortcuts to process the information. Understanding actions of the United States Department of State, especially on the amount of information passed by cable, it becomes easy to see how global events may be collapsed to just a few sentences (Galbraith, 2011).
3. *Humans react emotionally before rationally.* This term, “primacy of affect” is well known in psychology literature (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998; Spezio & Adolphs, 2007) and recognized as to how humans often highlight what is important to their cognitive selves. It is the result of application of stimuli; political leaders on the global stage often use narrative to elicit emotion to their advantage. It is hard to look

at any charismatic actor, whether positively or negatively associated, without having the gut reaction of primacy.

4. *Humans process information through two systems.* The work of Kahneman (2011) suggests that humans process information through two systems simultaneously. The first takes the form of ingrained, unconscious, automatic actions to stimuli. The second is the more conscious behaviors of a cogently difficult task that requires focus. System 1 usually informs System 2 via emotional signals (hence bullet 3). In a crisis or confrontational situation, reactions to global events will go first through System 1 and inform System 2 what should be felt. This processing works for everything from prepared political narratives to the social media understanding of events happening half a world away to participant understanding of international dialogue.
5. *Humans function through hot cognition.* When confronted with a social/political concept or object, such as those presented in narratives, a human will seek to attach meaning to it. Often, when introduced to the new concept, humans will form not just a rational (System 2) position, but also an emotional (System 1) position. Further contact with the idea then activates the emotional response as much as a rational one. This is especially prominent when encountering information that is incongruent with previous held conceptions (Redlawsk, 2002). A constructivist view on this would state that all international interactions are laced with the knowledge of previous encounters, and as such, there is some predictability of the new encounter. A weak state will remain a weak state; where terrorists will perform terrorist actions; this hot cognition will bias the response from other actors.

6. *Humans integrate information that confirms their bias more easily and will attack information against their bias more strongly.* Humans suffer from biases, as pointed out from the automatic effects from points three through five. When encountering information that coincides with this bias, humans tend to accept it as truth with less argument than if it is against their bias (Taber & Lodge, 2006). Interestingly, however, when receiving information that goes against their bias, humans spend more time counterarguing the position, especially as knowledge increases (Taber & Lodge, 2006). This point is so strong that even presenting counter-points to a bias further entrenches the belief at time of formation (Chong & Druckman, 2013). Where reality becomes constructed in postmodernist international theory, such as Neo-Gramscianism, Constructivism, or World Systems theory, an actor will filter information being provided by nation-states and other actors accordingly to their worldview. If it does not fit their world view, then the actor will argue vehemently against the facts provided, like often occurs within international institutions such as the United Nations.
7. *Humans will actively seek information that already confirms their beliefs.* An individual will seek out information that does not cause cognitive dissonance within them and interpret facts to solidify their own opinions (Gaines, Kuklinski, Quirk, Peyton, & Verkuilen, 2007). This effect is tested by Kahan, Jenkins-Smith, and Braman (2010) in attempting to understand why individuals fail to agree with scientific consensus, and Taber and Lodge (2006), in their work on disconfirmation bias, additionally find support for this adaptation. In the international realm, this helps to explain how events like the nuclear testing of North Korea can be viewed as both

- offensive and defensive to different nation-states. Additionally, it explains why regional coalitions can form from states that share interests within institutional theory (Keohane & Martin, 1995; Krachtowil & Ruggie, 1985).
8. *Humans go to great lengths to protect their identity.* Humans will use the enumerated strategies in points six and seven to preserve their understanding of the world and their position within it. Within international theory, a nation-state's identity and its sovereignty are very closely entwined to the point of physical defense to keep itself congruent. Even non-state actors may resort to these actions, in which they will use casuistry to give reasoning to their non-norm actions (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998).
 9. *Humans give prime attention to groups and networks.* Those with whom a human relates often have a strong influence on the beliefs of that human. As Granovetter (1973) indicates, the power of the network to influence individuals from a sociological perspective is incredible. As nations, nation-states, and institutional actors are made up of groups of humans, the primacy that are given to groups that share similar cognitive beliefs must be taken into understanding. This becomes especially important from the constructivist perspective, as groups strive to construct intentional inherent meaning of political objects and institutions at the international level (Johnston, 2001; Wendt, 1999).
 10. *Humans use and make sense of the world through narrative.* As enumerated in the introduction to this section, humans primarily use narrative to establish the world around them. Polkinghorne as cited in Shanahan, et al. (2017) describes that humans use narrative to give essential meaning to human existence. At the highest level of international relations, these narratives must indeed be used to give meaning to the

shared existence on Earth. It is how individuals make sense of the chaos of global events (Devetak, 2009).

Given *homo narrans* and the psychological literature framing it, it becomes non-sequitur that narrative has a special power with which rationality and facts cannot fully compete with. *Homo Narrans*, and the power narratives carry, can then be taken to the international realm. For a realist, narratives have power that might obfuscate hard facts and beliefs. For a liberalist, narratives bring together groups into positive cohesion. For the neo-realist, neo-liberal, and international political economist, narratives describe the functioning and power of economics instead of hard military threats. For the Marxist and other critical theorists, narratives are used to establish the class lines and the relationships between those classes. For the constructivist, narratives are used to construct the identities of the nation-states that participate in the then-constructed international order, full of narratively constructed norms and taboos.

Narrative, then, is vitally important to all theory of international relations, as it greatly informs how humans perform decision-making. As the decision-making process is heavily studied within the public policy literature, it comes as no surprise that the strongest tool for narrative analysis come from that literature, the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) developed by Jones and McBeth (2010). However, to best understand the variety of tools that are being left behind in favor of the preferred approach in this thesis, an overview of narrative work within international relations is provided.

Narrative Study in International Relations

The turn towards studying narrative in political science comes mainly upon the heels of post-modernist interpretive work from the early 1990s and 2000s. This means that narrative

study in international relations is a relatively recent subject that has only proliferated in the last few years.

Individual works were started and used by scholars without an overarching framework for research. The most likely start for the move towards narrative understanding in international relations was the push by Wendt (1999) to include current sociological methodology into international relations. Here, Wendt was one of the proponents of constructive theory, bringing social construction to how the international system operates. The insertion of social construction within both the realist and liberalist mentality gives way for the analysis of the framework constructing the international order and the societal conditions that produce these orders. Essentially, without Wendt's beginning, narrative analysis would not be possible.

This is shown in the general creep of narrative analysis working into pockets of the international relations community, as the constructivist international relations ontology grows. Roberts (2000) and others within the African Studies community began looking at how narratives are controlled within the states themselves and how it develops the group identity within the nation-states themselves. An entire issue of *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* (Volume 33, issue 3) was dedicated to various articles involving narrative relations on the African continent. Scott (2000) introduced the idea of media representation of international relations within her work on the Iran Hostage Situation of the Reagan transitional period, while Shinar (2000) followed closely with the media representation of conflict in the Middle East and Northern Ireland. The oft-intertwined narratives of conflict and peace processes would stay a popular course of study (Auerbach, 2009; Chandler, 2010; Fetherston, 2000; Kacowicz, 2005; Kupermintz & Salomon, 2005; Peteet, 2005; Schick, 2011; Smith, 2006).

During the late 90s and early 2000s, the Post-Soviet turn features heavily within both the international relations and narrative literature. Work began focusing on understanding how narrative adds to the processing of international events, like that of Brown and Theodossopoulos (2000) on the Balkan Conflict and Baines (2005) focusing on post-Apartheid South Africa. Aalto (2000) examines the idea of narration on identity in a geopolitical context with Estonia, again focusing on the use of narrative in understanding geopolitical identity. Identity politics continued to produce important work on narrative, including national and sovereign identity (Carcasson, 2000; Cruz, 2000; Cornelissen, 2004; Demo, 2005; Eigler, 2005; Galasiński, & Meinhof, 2001; Hughes, 2005; Leibold, 2006; Mälksoo, 2006; Perez, 2009) and immigrant identity (Kuntsman, 2003; MacAulay, 2004; Mains, 2004). Unsurprisingly, the international human rights narrative is filtered through a constructivist lens as well, especially in the use of personal narrative as norm construction (Adebanwi, 2004; Engel, 2005; Schaffer & Smith, 2004) and post-colonial development (Kothari, 2006), among other norm-formation events (Wiener, 2009).

Narrative also takes up residence within the discussion of non-state actors in global affairs such as sanctuary (Lippert, 2006), narrative on constitutional framing in international law (Frankenberg, 2006), post-Soviet security (Kitchen, 2009; McLeod, 2013), international development (Biccum, 2005; Fukuda-Parr, 2011) and narrative as defining international history (Bourdieu, 2008). The effect on culture is also targeted by Kratchovil (2008) in understanding how Russian elites resist “Europeanization,” as well as Zaiotti (2011)’s work on the narrative conception of the European Union under the Schengen Agreement.

As can be seen, the spread of narrative through disciplines is tied to enhanced understanding of discourse and personal involvement within global relations. Narratives slowly wove their way into international scholars’ attention. As Roberts (2006) noted, “there has been a

significant embrace of the narrative as a fundamental research tool” (p.703). This process culminated in the formation of a specialized journal targeted towards further combining work on narrative and international relations: *The Journal of Narrative Politics* (York University, 2014).

However, the biggest advent in international narratives is the idea of strategic narratives as suggested by Miskimmon, O’ Loughlin, and Roselle (2013), which gives a well-thought out grounding for how international narratives can play into the more recently developed line of constructivist and other post-positivist theory of international relations. The strategic narrative generates an understanding of how narratives are used by actors within the international political system, including how they define narratives, how narratives are used and disseminated, and how narrative affect the international order. Work has been taken along this domain, including production of an edited book by Miskimmon, O’ Loughlin, and Roselle (2017) that covers a variety of topics, including further methodological work on the strategic narrative, such as the role of narrative in terrorism (Archetti, 2017), international development (Singh, 2017), and international order (Miskimmon & O’Loughlin, 2017a).

There are more than just these few works on the strategic narrative, giving it a level of credence that must be explored to understand the role of narratives among other international relations scholars. Concepts focus on projection of narrative to other nation-states (Chaban, Bacon, Burton, & Vernygoya, 2018; Miskimmon & O’Loughlin, 2017b; Szotek, 2017), the framing of narrative by individual nation-states within public diplomacy (Hertner & Miskimmon, 2015; Natarajan, 2014), the media ecology and reception within nation-states (Chaban, Miskimmon, & O’Loughlin, 2017; Colley, 2017; Hinck, Kluver, & Cooley, 2018; Schmitt, 2018; Szotek, 2018), the building of international norms (Bacon & Burton, 2018), how narratives are contested in social media (Hellman & Wagnsson, 2015; Zaharna, 2016), and how it features into

information warfare and security culture (Dumitrescu, 2018). The strategic narrative also appears in more specific work, such as genocide narratives (Irvin-Erickson, 2017), intervention-as-peace narratives (Lemay-Hébert & Visoka, 2017), and energy narratives from the European Union (Bain & Chaban, 2017).

However, even given this well-regarded line of work, the strategic narrative suffers from some fundamental flaws to the study of international narratives. In the next section, I will discuss the ontological issues with the framework and explore how these issues extrapolate to epistemological problems within the international relations theory.

Why not the Strategic Narrative?

As outlined earlier, the strategic narrative proposed by Miskimmon, O' Loughlin, and Roselle (2013) provides strong theory work on how narratives can be understood within international relations. Initially, the line of work is very quick to understand that the embedding of narrative exists within the constructivist viewpoint of international relations; however, there are issues with this understanding that make the strategic narrative a sub-par tool for analyzation. In this section, it is important to realize the failings of the strategic narrative in depth, so as to best understand choosing the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) as the tool of choice for analyzing international narratives.

Miskimmon, et al. (2013) define their strategic narrative as “a means for political actors to construct a shared meaning of past, present, and future of international relations in order to shape the opinions and behavior of actors at home or overseas” (p. 176). While the reference to political actors can be interpreted broadly as any participant within the political system as Easton (1953) does; in this case, it is limiting to those who are invested within the narrative themselves.

Inherently, Miskimmon, et al. (2013) relegate the actor towards a participant within the narrative: “actors are given meaning to themselves and others by narrative” (p. 30). This definition of actors relies on relative power assessment to prop up the strategic narrative framework. Miskimmon, et al. (2013) list their actors in terms that already assumes a certain presence of an international system to be working in, such as unipole, hegemon, great powers, and rogue states. It is difficult to assess a narrative and its effect on those hearing the narrative if the actors come with pre-defined power relationships couched inside a specifically defined system. As Frey (1985) notes, because system differentiation hedges primarily upon actor definition; choosing how the actors define themselves in narrative will inevitably lead to assumptions in the system, structures, and power dynamics. Miskimmon, et al. (2013), limits these within their own definition.

Here the NPF excels, providing the ability to classify actors as well as establish their relations within the narrative itself aside from the narrator giving the narrative; this then assumes that there is no given system that frames the relations of power or the actors within the international system, much like would be found within the policy sphere, accordingly to the basic garbage can model of policy proposed by Kingdon (1984). This gives analytical and interpretive power in being able to apply multiple, often conflicting theories to the narrative to be able to empirically dissect it from several angles. The NPF is ontologically compatible with several of the diverse policy study theories as listed by Weible and Sabatier (2018); its theoretical openness should extend to international ontologies as well.

The strategic narrative framework is further divided into three types: the system narrative, the identity narrative, and the policy narrative (Miskimmon, et al. 2013; Miskimmon, et al. 2017). The systems narrative seeks to construct the international order out of the anarchy,

giving form to the boundaries in which the players interact. It is the narrative that generates order from anarchy. The identity narrative is how nation-states understand themselves, basically the culture that begins to pervade the system. And finally, the policy narrative, in which actual policy recommendation is discussed. It is unhelpful to think of these conceptually as distinct and separate, especially after Miskimmon, et al. (2013) work hard to tie the concept of identity directly to that of the actor itself; not surprising, given the focus on a constructivist ontology. It would be given then, that each level interacts and impacts the other, meaning there truly is no division between the narrative types; all being sourced entirely as narrative circuitously defining itself by the actor involved in the actual narrative.

While the constructivist ontology is put into practice, it delineates itself away from the ability to determine the narrative as a singularly understandable object for analysis. It runs into the great agency-structure debate, as highlighted by Bieler and Morton (2001), by failing to disentangle the narrative being spoken away from the narrator, essential pieces in allowing for positivist analysis of the narrative. The strategic narrative can never fully be enumerated from the structure, so analyzation within this framework will be tainted by the backgrounding theory one comes to it with, whether inherently realist, liberal, Marxist, or feminist. Miskimmon, et al. (2013), suggest that the strategic narrative bridges the agent-structure duality, but because of the inability to distance relations, it suffers from a post-positivist grasp of interpretation of the narrative that muddies the waters of scientific observation of international relations. The tools that should be used must be able to not only bridge the agent-structure debate; but must pass the positivist need for empirical observation. The strategic narrative proposed by Miskimmon, et al. (2013) fails on both accounts.

Miskimmon, et al. (2013) gives a framework based around understanding the communicative power of the narrative, delineating four different types of narratives based upon the strength of description, very thin to very thick. The basis of this typology takes from communications literature and focuses on the attempts of the narrator in persuasion of the audience. Their framework starts at a positivist/rationalist beginning and then works its way towards post-structuralist analysis. Miskimmon, et al. (2013) explain the rationale of each level as the depth of coercion being levied. Very thin is strictly coercion by any other name, whereas very thick involves setting system changing narratives that bring about structural change through discourse. The strategic narrative is capable of all, but Miskimmon, et al. (2013) seem to put the greatest emphasis on the very thick narrative, suggesting that this specific type of narrative lends itself best to the system of contestation because of inherent power differentials established by the discourse and its meaning-giving power. Here, the NPF does not differentiate from the purposes of the narrative, assuming that any policy narrative projected is indeed used for persuasion and inherently challenges the status quo by seeking policy change, so classification based upon the nature of the communication is itself weak. It is objectionable that the narrative itself is ignored within the strategic narrative and its framework designed for narrative analysis. While the communicative power might be key to understanding the relations through the constructivist ontology they propose, the framework fails to understand that the narrative, in and of itself, has power in its constructions or deconstruction.

Miskimmon, et al. (2013) are very concerned with the concept of power within the international system, and, therefore, miss a large discussion on how narratives affect the idea of sovereignty. Their approach caches itself within the idea of discourse, in which, “all actors are born in and produced through discourse” (Miskimmon, et al., 2013, p. 106). They do touch

somewhat on the idea of the identity narrative of a culture/society is propense towards the formation of nation-states, but it does not discuss how the identity narrative affects the interior actions towards relations of the given nation-state. It takes the discourse of state identity almost as a given, as mentioned above within the discussion of systems, in giving the roles directly, rather than using competing narratives to understand the true position of the nation-state or other actor within the system. In a way, the strategic narrative is normative in its presentation of sovereignty, adjusting to understand what a nation-state should be within the identity narrative and the structural narrative; rather than letting the narrative speak for itself as objective information. It takes away the discussion of what constitutes a nation-state and the sovereignty that is granted for its identification as such away almost entirely, leaving a key component of the current international systems discussion purposely solved in order to lock itself into a theoretical ontology.

Next, the new media ecology that Miskimmon, et al. (2013) focus upon generates additional problems within the interpretive context. Miskimmon, et al. (2013) propose that analysis of narratives must necessarily be underpinned by study of the network of transmission; which, while true, focuses only on the current situation of global communications. While this is positive in the current clime with elite access slowly being driven away by the citizen-as-narrator through cellular phone access and freedom of data, it ignores the aspect of individual consumption and generation of the narrative over time. Many of the narratives used within international relations, especially Miskimmon, et al.'s (2013) identity narrative, are based upon oral traditions that stretch back centuries, if not millennia in some cases. Understanding the narrative's history and build allows for objective interpretation of the narrative, as well as deeper understanding of how culture affects cognizance of the narrative.

The way a narrative is delivered is very important to understanding the narrative in and of itself, as Miskimmon, et al. (2013) make clear; however, the strategic narrative's attempt to understand deeply how the transmission occurs through the current climate without referencing the historic attempt at narration fails to elucidate the intricate ways that social constructions affect the persuasion process. When Miskimmon, et al. (2013) do reference the social construction building their "information infrastructure" (p. 150), it suffers from the same dualistic nature found within the constructivist ontology as mentioned above. Narratives set up the media ecology which reports the narratives, seemingly at the ability to be debated endlessly like the agent-structure issue discussed earlier. So many moving pieces broaden the attempt to understand the influence of narrative upon the receiver; the international aspect creates an unobjective ability frustrating the predictive power of the framework. Unfortunately, a strong focus on the ecology itself versus the message being projected leads to the loss of objective positivism. Therefore, the analysis of the media ecology that the strategic narrative suggests is slightly stunted in accessing the power of the narrative in and of itself.

Finally, Miskimmon, et al. (2013)'s work is very useful for a theoretical grounding, but it lacks the empirical rigor to be able to bridge the positivist/post-positivist gap. Strategic narratives are built from constructivist thought, where society and its ideals are constructed by human thought and action. The strategic narrative and its framework of analysis, by their own claim, is not intended for straightforward narrative analysis (Miskimmon, et al., 2013, p. 13). It is here where the Narrative Policy Framework is itself expressive in the giving the ability to focus directly on the policy narrative, as well as enumerating theory ideals to ground the narrative analysis, by not being directly bound to a singular theory, unlike strategic narratives. Again, the NPF is an analysis tool rather than a definitive of parts of a system.

Overall, the entire ontological construction of the strategic narrative within international relations requires the necessity of post-modernist understanding of the international system. In this way, it loses its ability to perform theoretically within a positivist environment. Then, if we understand that there is a failure within the tool to produce useful analytical positivist predictions, the science part of political science, then the international relations scholar must work towards finding a better tool.

The Narrative Policy Framework

This thesis presents such a tool: the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF). Referring back to the idea of *homo narrans* put together by Shanahan et al. (2017), the NPF is built to understand how narratives are used within the policy process. The underpinnings of *homo narrans* are extrapolated into a structured framework to break down and analyze policy narratives throughout all contexts, no matter the policy concern being debated (Shanahan, Jones, & McBeth, 2015). This gives the NPF an objective and positivist reality in which to understand the subjective political contents that are created within policy narratives.

The basic framework consists of the deconstruction of the narrative into four parts (Jones & McBeth, 2010):

- **Setting or Context** – this section grounds the narrative. It allows for the narrative to establish the policy problem and how it currently exists within the policy arena. It can establish legal parameters, geography, events, evidence, and important features that work to define where the narrative will take place and under what conditions (Shanahan, et al., 2017). For international narratives, this may exist as historical or even systemic discussions, including norms, institutions, and especially the economic and social conditions that exist to inform the other parts of the narrative.

- Plot – This part is the heart of the narrative. It produces the reality that involves how the setting and characters interact. It operationalizes the other parts of the narrative, giving meaning and credence to the events that transpire. It sets in place the causal mechanisms that produce the policy problem. The plot is the arc of the narrative from beginning, to middle, to end, with a multitude of plotlines initially advanced by Stone (2012).

Considering the international narrative will have similar characteristics to that of the policy narratives within a nation, it stands to reason that plotlines will be similar and will have essentials like causal mechanisms. However, because storytelling takes many forms dependent on culture and values, it should not be surprising that plotlines other than those found in the national policy process may be found by the intrepid international scholar.

- Characters – the narrative thrives on the characters. This defines those who are involved within the plot. It gives clear indications of who is doing what and their relationship within the narrative. This differs from the actor situation that Miskimmon, et al. (2013) suggest within their strategic narrative framework. It allows for the narrator to parse themselves away from the policy narrative that they might be espousing, though it is not entirely the case in all narratives. It gives those who are named in the narrative essential characteristics intrinsic to their description. Within the NPF, heroes work towards a policy solution and are champions of a cause, while villains are adversaries who do harm by causing the policy problem or prevent its solution. However, even bystanders may be named as being affected by the actions of the villains (victims), assisting the heroes (allies), or those who profit from the policy situations (beneficiaries) (Shanahan, et al.,

2017). Though values may differ internationally, the idea of these basic characters are found in most cultural tales.

- **Moral of the Story (Policy Solution)** – this is ultimately the given point of the policy narrative. It is the proposed actions to be taken to solve the policy problem. It is the end state of the action of the characters and their motivations (Shanahan, et al., 2017). Its inclusion is what sets a policy narrative off from any other kind of narrative and makes them inherently political in nature. It is often morally affected, giving a normative stance on what policy should be or how policy problems should be handled.

Shanahan, et al. (2015) state that not all parts of the framework are going to exist in all narratives. That is, narratives will vary in their narrativity. Therefore, for suggestion of identification, a narrative must consist of at least a character and a reference to the moral of the story. This suggests that narratives exist in a variety of forms, but the scholar is still able to discern that there are comparable elements between policy arenas and narrative forms. This is beneficial for the international relations scholar as it suggests that policy narratives being used within the international system can be compared, regardless of the culture or language that is generating them. This cross-cultural comparison ability, even through language differences, makes the NPF an extremely strong research tool.

On top of this basic framework to understand the narratives, the NPF also proposes three levels of analysis which are important to the policy process. While the levels interact, they are specifically drawn to be able to identify scope for hypotheses and grounding the units of analysis for the scholar. The NPF identifies the micro-level, the meso-level, and the macro-level, with each corresponding to a specific unit of analysis.

The micro-level deals with individuals and how they interact with narratives on a personal level. Here, the basis of *homo narrans* comes into play. This concept underpins the micro-level, attempting to understand how the individual is affected by the narratives that are presented, how they might be internalized by the individual, and how presentation of the narrative may change based on differing the narrative elements. To compare to the strategic narrative of Miskimmon, et al. (2013), the micro-level frees the narrative from the projector and focuses on the recipient of the narrative, as well as the creation of the narrative itself.

The meso-level is referred to by Shanahan, et al. (2017) as the *agora narrans*, drawing upon the idea of the Greek *agora* where the people came together in assemblage to discuss democratically. It is how the policy narratives exist within the policy environment. Here, the NPF has no specific theory, being able to be finessed to working towards multiple policy theories about the creation, projection, and decision regarding policy. It is here policy-making occurs: policy groups advocate, actors put forth narrative, and contestation for being central to the policy-making agenda occur. It is important to understand the idea of actors in this case. They are the more generic term understood by Easton (1953), but also extends to advocacy groups, coalitions, and Essentially, the *agora narrans* is similar to the idea of the “new media environment” which Miskimmon, et al. (2013) put forth, but the NPF is more open to interpretation of who the actors are, the formats the narratives may travel in, and, especially, the subsystems which subsume the policy process.

The last level of analysis is the macro-level. According to Shanahan, et al. (2017), this area concerns the grand narratives. These are the cultural and institutional level narratives. It is here that the “meta-narrative” exists: the idea of the system under social construction as understood within shared knowledge. This level of analysis is similar to general gist of the

strategic narrative as a whole, understanding that the grand narrative helps create that shared understanding of a nation, culture, or group. However, unlike the strategic narrative, the NPF understands that these grand narratives, while socially constructed, have an objective reality that can be compared to. It should be understood that the meso-level discussions often operate within these larger macro-level narratives, setting the base foundations and assumptions of which the meso-level narratives make use.

Finally, the NPF discusses the content of the narrative and the strategy it seeks to use within the policy arena. Shanahan, et al. (2017) discuss three types of narrative strategies: scope of conflict, causal mechanisms, and devil-angel shift. The first involves how the narrative is strategically constructed to either expand or contain the policy issue to new groups of individuals, often by portraying themselves as either winning or losing the policy battle. The second involves structuring the understanding of how the policy problem came to be, pinning blame on actors or conditions that led to the policy problem. The NPF literature identifies four types of causal incidents derived from Stone (1989): intentional (intended consequence, purposeful action), inadvertent (unintended consequence, purposeful action), accidental (unintended consequence, unguided action), and mechanical (intended consequence, unguided action). The final type of narrative study understands how narrators exaggerate the maliciousness of the opponents within the narrative (devil shift) or whether they emphasize their own policy solution and focus less of the villains (angel shift). To do so, it compares the identification of opposing narrators as villains and the narrator as hero within the story. Unlike the strategic narrative, which classifies content upon the communicative power (Miskimmon, et al., 2013), the NPF prefers to understand the narrative content and strategy itself.

Adjusting the Framework to Work in IR

Though the NPF presents itself as a strong working tool for international relations, its history as a tool at the international level has not been explored thoroughly. Published scholarly work is hard to find, with truly international relations level, though it has been used in a variety of different countries. Lawton and Rudd (2014) take the work international, using the NPF to understand the United Kingdom's embrace of ecosystem science within policy. Work by Lybecker, McBeth, Husman, and Pelikan (2015) has examined narratives along the U.S.-Mexico border. Beura (2015) uses the NPF in a comparative manner to understand how authoritarian regimes build their narratives, using Libya as a focus case. De Sy (2016) seeks to understand the media narratives of Syrian refugees in Quebec, Canada. Schlauffer (2018) takes the NPF to the EU, where she examines the use of evidence within Swiss education policy debates. Huda (2018) and Olofsson, Weible, Heikkila, and Martel (2018) move the NPF understanding to policy process of environmental concerns to India, where their research focuses on media representation of agricultural biotechnology and air pollution. While these pieces take the NPF outside of the United States, however, they are still mostly focused on only levels found within a singular nation-state rather than a truly international examination.

However, a scant few pieces of scholarship have managed to push past the single nation-state level and moved toward truly international applications. O'Bryan, Dunlop, and Radaelli (2014) use the NPF to comparatively examine two national legislatures' response to the Arab Spring of 2011, learning how heuristics work differently between the United States and the United Kingdom. Fløttum and Gjerstad (2017) bring the NPF to large international discussions by examining narratives of climate change that come from the United Nations, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and white papers from two different countries.

Work by Nisbett (2017) introduces global media and political economy to NPF analysis, considering the discussion of child undernutrition in India.

With only three major sources of exploration within an international context, it becomes obvious that the Narrative Policy Framework has not yet been adopted as a tool for international relations scholars. However, as stated above, I believe the NPF to be a much-needed tool for a multiplicity of international relations theories. To better set the NPF to work within the constraints of international relations, there need to be some adjustments, which significantly contribute to its ability to be used within the international relations scholarship. I will now elaborate on these slight changes and posture them within the international relations theory.

Understanding Characters

Characters have an essential role within the Narrative Policy Framework. These are often the essence that gives humanity and empathy to the narrative, even though the characters may themselves be groups or other institutions. The use of characters also suggests that there is some plotline in which the characters interact. Additionally, characters often function as symbolism of values that the narrative is trying to espouse or deny, hence the entirety of base archetypes such as heroes and villains within the NPF.

For a national policy arena, it is easy to understand the characters as either individuals or groups of individuals working within the plot. Within the international waters, it gets murkier. Here, individuals make statements on behalf of countries, especially within the United Nations, nation-states are anthropomorphized and left as a singular entity, institutions contain a myriad of organizational thoughts, and regional complexities form groups-within-groups-within-groups. How then, is one to understand the position of characters within this complex system?

For the purposes of the Narrative Policy Framework at an international level, it is best to conform with the standards put forth within the earliest theories of international relations. The guiding definition should be the action of the nation-state, even when being considered on an individual human level. Nation-states and international groups have speakers and bureaucrats who perform the work as directed and reflect the values of the national or organizational culture with which they serve. In this case, a turn from Keohane and Nye's (2012) work upon interdependence theory is critical. The actions are executed within the interests, whether social (Wendt, 1999), economical (Krasner, 1976), or power-related (Morgenthau & Thompson, 1985), of the nation-states, the primary actors within the international systems (Singer, 1961), by agents who carry out the continual work of day-to-day transactions.

Therefore, it is best to understand characters as being representative of the larger groups. For example, the words of President Donald Trump or Chancellor Angela Merkel are purported by actors, including media, within the international arena to represent the desires of the nation-states they serve. They can specifically be used within narratives as a symbolism for their political charges. However, within the case of interdependence theory, the work of individuals may not just be limited to those who head the nation-state (Keohane & Nye, 2012). Diplomacy, trade, and other low-level politics are essential pieces performed by representatives of the state who participate within multiple channels of contact. By taking this focus on the fact that individuals are representative, it allows for the creation of narratives by the nation-states, international organizations, and other non-governmental organizations through the actions performed within their role at the organization at the international level. Indeed, it turns *homo narrans* into the well understood *statum narrans*, which encompasses all possible actors at the international level.

However, there will still be times when individuals are named as characters. This is true of leadership of international groups or non-democratic nation-states especially. Charismatic leaders will find themselves a focus within the international arena, especially those that develop a cult of personality within their organization. For example, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un is not the only individual functioning within North Korea, but his extreme control of the nation-state renders him perfect for becoming a character within an international policy narrative; Osama Bin Laden also provides a non-state actor example of an individual named as a character.

To sum, characters will be nation-states, individuals, institutions, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, and non-state actors. International events can be generated by all of these actors and should in all reality should be considered possible characters when outlining international political narratives.

What is the policy of the policy narrative in international context?

Unlike the national arena, in which laws and rules are made through clear decision-making institutions, the international arena has no oversight of the imposition and execution of policy decisions. Thus brings the question: can actions within the international system be considered policy without all of the features of the policy process?

Yes, actions can and should be interpreted as policy. Traditionally, actions taken by nation-states in response to others within the international system, whether for power, social, or economic interests, are referred to within their own nation-state as “foreign policy,” lending credence to these actions being played out or used as a call to action from other international actors as forming an essence of policy. Even the basic understanding from the policy studies literature, provided by Dye (1972), is what the government chooses to do or not to do. This can

be extrapolated to what nation-states and non-state actors choose to do or not do. Therefore, almost every action taken within the international level will cause policy, from which there will be conflict among the actors which can then be narrated.

Therefore, anything as simple as making declarative statements on events, participating in events (which may even include warfare and other forms of violence), or even diplomacy becomes policy that can be narrated. In particular, statements put out by officials in the capacity to make governmental or institutional decisions and the actions taken by actors in the name of the interests of the nation-state should be examined. At the highest levels, these would be policy statements made within the United Nations, signatory treaties within regional/global alliances, and resolutions put out by international organizations.

It should be noted, especially within the United Nations, the instances of focus for the study of the policy process by Laswell (1956) exist at the international level. There is clearly the linear model assumed in the early days of policy analysis: intelligence (study of information), promotion (agenda setting), prescription (policy marketing), invocation (policy-making), application (policy implementation), termination (alleviation of policy problem), and appraisal (feedback on policy). These forms are all present in the major theories of policymaking, such as Kingdon's (1984) multiple streams, Sabatier's (1988) advocacy coalition framework, and Baumgartner and Jones' (1991) punctuated equilibrium theory, though their exact functions may differ slightly under each theory.

Within the United Nations, information is examined in large droves; the same with almost all international actors (intelligence). It becomes easy due to the increasingly viable ways of communicating via the digital mediums. Individual representatives within the United Nations bring issues to the forefront of consideration for individual managing organizations, the General

Assembly, and the Security Council (promotion). Issue solutions are debated within these areas (prescription). Once a successful idea is constituted, treaty-making or passing resolutions occur (invocation).

Application then becomes a problem on the individual nation-state level; however, the nation-states can act within the precedent of the United Nations to enact policy-making to their abilities through limitations on their own sovereignty. There are arguments within some theories that especially powerful nation-states can and do refuse to cooperate, such as realism and world-systems theory to an extent, but these hinge most reliably upon the understanding of a Westphalian system where state sovereignty, territoriality, and nonintervention are prominent features to discourage this self-limitation (Caporaso, 1978; Morgenthau & Thompson, 1985; Schmidt, 2011). However, other theories would argue that nation-states are willing to limit their own power and sovereignty when in their own interest or because of international norms (Checkel, 2001; Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; Oye, 1985). Regardless, it is clear through direct objective analysis that binding treaties and resolutions are enacted and enforced among and within sovereign nation-states. Therefore, the actions of the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations should be taken seriously within the context of policy application.

With application out of the way, termination often occurs within the international arena. In many cases, the resolutions and actions of the United Nations have defined time limits. This extends not only to developmental processes, but also to peacekeeping operations. A great example is the Millennial Development goals, which had an end date of 2015 and terminated within that time frame (United Nations, 2018). However, this is not to assume that the policy problem itself is necessarily terminated at the end of the program; this is often no different with

policy at a national level, especially for intractable problems. This leads to the finality of policy-making, in which appraisal occurs. At the United Nations level, reports are generated upon the programs which are then reviewed by the representative nation-states.

Given that the most basic roles of public policy can be found at the international level, it is safe to assume that the actions taken by nation-state and non-state actors towards one another or by intergovernmental organizations towards nation-states and non-state actors can fulfill the role of policy. It is understood, then, that this policy will inherently have narratives with it, with which to analyze.

Shifting the Levels of Analysis

The final adjustment to make the Narrative Policy Framework into a stronger tool for the international relations scholar is to synchronize the levels of analysis. Considering the level of analysis are essential for proposing hypothesis and using the NPF as a tool (Shanahan, et al., 2017), resetting the levels of analysis to the international level from a national level is a must. However, there is ease within this, as the international relationship scholar should already be working within levels of analysis. Given this, it is easy to turn to Singer (1961) as a starting point for the shifting the level of analysis. Accordingly, Singer (1961) agrees with the Narrative Policy Framework that there exists three various levels of analysis, though the level of focus often varies by theory. Moving from bottom to top, to Singer (1961), it is first the individual or institutional level, the second level is the nation-state level, the third being the systematic level, or relations between the nation-states.

Respectively, these can relate almost directly to the NPF's micro-, meso-, and macro level of analysis. However, it is not a one-for-one transition. Accordingly, Singer (1961) understands that even the levels he suggests are not straightforward, as the discussion wavers

between positivism and interpretationism on the various of levels. This, however, is where the NPF excels, bringing both to the level of analysis framework.

First, we meld the first level: the individual level of analysis. Both obviously believe that the individual human can affect and be affected by the policy process. *Homo Narrans* easily exists side-by-side the microlevel of analysis. However, a small shift will need take place. As explained in the characters section, the idea of individuals can be symbolic representation of the nation-state when acting (*statum narrans*). Hence, the first shift is that the micro-level of analysis of the Narrative Policy Framework will move to include nation, non-state actors, and nation-states, *statum narrans*, as a focus at the individual level of analysis. Here, the point is to understand how the narratives are projected by the *statum narrans* and how the narrative can affect the *statum narrans*.

Second comes the meso-level. In Singer (1961)'s analysis this was the level of the nation-state. Since this has been rolled into the micro-level of analysis, the understanding must be pulled from the Narrative Policy Framework. The NPF looks for the area in which the stories are strategically told and contested as part of the policy process. It seeks the *agora narrans*. Essentially, in this case, it would be the *fora* for which the *statum narrans* can produce and receive narratives. It is this area where the policy subsystems can engage and coalitions form around belief systems. For *statum narrans*, the largest forum for global affairs happens to be the United Nations, but can be in any number of other, smaller, regional *fora* that consist of nation-state groups. Realistically, this goes on to cover most intergovernmental organizations and coordinated groups of non-governmental organizations and transnational advocacy networks. These coordinated groups work together to project the narratives to others and contest the narratives within these spaces, often using a variety of media to be able to do so.

The final level focuses on the macro. For both Singer (1961) and Shanahan, et al. (2017), this is the grandest level of analysis, taking in within the entire narrative system. For international relations, it is the base global system that the theory holds belief in. For a realist, it will be the state of anarchy with no higher power. For the liberalist, it is the regimes created by the cooperating nation states. For the constructivist, the theory states that social constructions like institutions and norms will be the format. For the Narrative Policy Framework, this highest level are the communal narratives that link together a variety of human events. They are a form of social construct, in which the overall themes of culture, law, and behavior are decided at the highest levels. Therefore, an international shift would at times incorporate the theory that is being used to explain the culture, accordingly with Singer (1961). However, in particular, as the decided international norms come to the forefront, it is multinational and regional treaties that enforce particular behaviors from *statum narrans*. It is built institutions that work to regulate the narratives that can be brought within the international system. It is more than coming together as a functional unit to solve policy problems and coalesce belief systems as in the coalitions within the meso-level. These institutions hold cultural ramifications for the binding of nation-states' action within any system described by international theory. It is where ideas like development, regional security, and climate change take place. The macro-level is where these decisions and discussions about the shape and future of humanity as a whole take place and are developed. Essentially, they are the grandest policy problems and the social constructs behind them that must be examined.

In all, the levels of analysis can be approached from any theoretical angle and provide a useful unit to look at and understand the narratives that are being produced by the *statum narrans*. The explanatory shift to the global allows for the incorporation of a variety of actors at

the micro-level; the exploration of the *agora narrans* in multiple *fora* at the meso-level, and the discussion of systems of behavior, institutions, and cultural normativity at the humanity scale for macro-level.

For the NPF to be a successful international tool, the three changes of expanding the character definition to the wider *statum narrans*, adjusting the role of policymaking so it is understood that it may not be entirely binding, and the shifting of levels of analysis to better incorporate the international level need to be made. However, having done so, the NPF lends itself as the strongest tool to analyze narratives within international relations. To finish this thesis and show how the adjusted NPF works within an international context, I present a case study of narrative discourse within the United Nations in an attempt to not only identify, but also visually display the extent and influence of narratives. This case study will use techniques from discourse analysis, in particular discourse networks. Thus, the next part of this thesis presents the study, beginning with an historical background, then moving to a brief discussion of the application of the NPF as modified for international contexts, and ending with discussion results and conclusions.

Case Study of the NPF

The United Nations, because of its strength of as a both a forum for *statum narrans* and itself an interpreter of narratives as a *statum narrans*, provides a perfect case study in which to understand international relations. In the United Nations, countries congregate to focus on international affairs, networking together to exchange information. Consequently, the narratives describing policy congregate there as well, creating a mish-mash of interconnected ideas. Because so many topics are addressed by the United Nations, to come under the purview of the top level of the organization, the Security Council, the policy problem must be considered high-

level politics. The Security Council contains many of the world's most powerful nations and their power to police within the name of peacekeeping and security is unparalleled. A direct conflict between nation-states would quickly come under the purview of the Security Council. Therefore, the focus of this case study will be on a policy problem within a violent setting: the drive for independence among separatists within the Caucasus region.

After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the oft-described bipolar international system fell into disarray. From one nation-state sprang many, often with disastrous effect, as a power vacuum and ethnic tensions lead to internal struggles among the many new countries. Unfortunately, these internal struggles often bled outward, involving many of the nearby nation-states as well. As these ethnic, stateless nations fought for their own independence, the international community took note as the violence increased. The spread of international relations forms a web between the countries involved in the struggle, their narratives of independence interweaving with international law.

This case study focuses upon one of these struggles within the Caucasus region where a multitude of ethnic groups had been forced together by the planning of the Stalinist regime. Due to the close quarters and a history of oppression, the new-found possibility of self-rule ignited a burning crisis that would spread across the region. In the heart of this region, along the coast of the Black Sea, the Abkhaz nation desired to have autonomy from underneath their ruling Soviet in Georgia, a claim with historical precedent within the region. In 1992, this situation exploded into full blown conflict with disastrous implications for the security of the region.

The case study will track the development of the policy narrative of the 1992 Georgia-Abkhaz separatist conflict within the forum of the United Nations, especially among the *statum narrans* that are participating within the conflict. The choice for using this specific conflict as a

case study revolves around the determination of sovereignty that comes with it; an essential issue that still pervades international relations today. Stateless nations are myriad and often lack the ability to project power within the international arena. They often tend towards violence within the encompassing nation-state; using it as particularly gruesome way to initiate policy and narrative.

Here, examining this case study will put a focus on the ideals of security, both inter and intra-nationally as the narratives of the *statum narrans* unavoidably clash within the international *fora*. The case study will focus on the how the *statum narrans* use the narratives to interact with each other, finding conflict and agreement in the form of discourse networks. Additionally, the historic nature of the conflict allows for a measure of explanatory prediction within the hypotheses where the final outcome has already been decided. Succinctly, because the outcome is known; the model can be compared to it for accuracy. However, to understand this conflict, I begin with a review the history of the two nations directly involved within the violence.

History of the Separatist Conflict

The historical lineage.

It is important to highlight that the ancient history of Abkhazia is intertwined with that of the nation-state of Georgia. Therefore, the continuing discussion of the history of the conflict will engender the history of both Georgia and Abkhazia. Part of the necessity of understanding the Abkhazian irredentist movement that participated in the conflict is the unique ethnic history between the two nations. This is also key to understanding Georgia's narrative claim of protection of territorial integrity that plays out within the narratives examined later. To better understand these two nations, the case study will look at some of differences between the two ethnic groups throughout their history, in an attempt to establish the why behind the Abkhazian claim to uniqueness and sovereignty that is communicated through their irredentist narrative.

From the Abkhazian historical perspective, as Chirikba (2009) points out that Abkhazia was its own kingdom under the Leonides dynasty within the 8th-10th century, when it was taken by the Byzantines. Abkhazia then continued onward from the 13th century as a principality under the rule of the Cachba dynasty (Chirikba, 2009). The Ottomans ruled from Istanbul starting in the late 15th to early 19th century, with the vassals of the Cachbas converting parts of the population to Islam (Derluguian, 1998; Zverev, 1996). The early 1800s changed the rule from Turkey to Russia, where Abkhazia was still a mostly independent protectorate until 1864, when the Russians abolished the principality and drew it fully within the Russian Empire (Chirikba, 2009).

In contrast, Derluguian (1998) also states that genealogical records can trace the ruling dynasty's name back to the 12th century as Shervashidze, a Georgian form, which muddles the narrative history being put forth by the Abkhazians (p. 264). This statement reinforces that the Abkhaz and Georgian cultural identities share linguistic similarities and that their history is not as plainly separable as the Abkhaz would like. Petersen (2008) bridges a gap between the two discussions, stating that the royal lines of Abkhazia and Georgia were combined within the 10th Century. Zverev (1996) states "the historical evidence is ambiguous, both unity with Georgia and autonomy can be argued on historical grounds" (n.p.). Regardless of the disputed nature, the irredentist movement strives to establish the independence of Abkhazia from Georgian rule in a historical context.

Additionally, there is a regional difference between Abkhaz and Georgian languages, as well as a strong cultural difference in genealogies (Derluguian, 1998; Petersen, 2008). Derluguian (1998, p. 265) notes that "no expert in Caucasian affairs would fail to mention this as an important difference," referring to the very specific genealogical distinction between the two

cultures. For Abkhazia, their genealogy is based on relic and customs-based kinships. Georgians, however, recognize genealogy through relationships towards the principalities they are descended from (Derluguian, 1998). Petersen (2008) calls out the cultural similarity to other North Caucasian peoples, such as the Chechens, which also trace their lineage in a similar fashion. The Abkhaz history as a subset of ethnicity within the Caucasus, distinctly apart from the Georgian, is quite clear.

The modern claim to Abkhaz independence.

Even though Abkhazia's history is fraught with crossing between a great many empires, it is the events in the early 1900s that establish the Abkhazian claim of a unique administrative area. This part of their history starts with the fall of the Russian Tsar and the Leninist Revolution of 1917-1921. The rise of Bolsheviks cemented a course of autonomy from Georgia during this time period (Derluguian, 1998). In 1921, the United Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) gave Abkhazia the status of an independent Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) and was still joined to Georgia under equal administrative status. Georgia itself was also labeled a Soviet Socialist Republic, the highest designation of countryhood within the Soviet administrative framework. This led to the establishment of the Abkhazian Constitution of 1925, providing a legal precedent of self-rule within the modern period and a separation from Georgia (Petersen, 2008). This model of self-rule was understood and accepted from the Georgian point of view in this time period.

The Stalinist era of forced Georgianization.

The contentions with Georgia in the modern framework begin under Stalin's rule, which saw Abkhazia become demoted to an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR), a lower jurisdiction in the hierarchy, within the Georgian SSR. Stalin, a Georgian himself, additionally kept a strict resettlement policy that moved Georgians into the Abkhazian homeland to increase

agricultural output of the region and as a form of cultural domination over the Abkhaz. With the forced resettling of Georgians within Abkhazia, fears of loss of homeland and culture rightly began to affect the Abkhazian elite. It should be noted that, by the end of the Stalin era, ethnic Abkhazians were the minority in Abkhazia, but held a majority of the upper positions in Abkhazian government (Zverev, 1996). Essentially, Moscow's policies towards Abkhazia ended up increasing ethnic tension due the process of "Georgianization" of the area and the push-back by the Abkhaz in power to marginalize the majority Georgians now living there (Derluguian, 1998; Petersen, 2008).

The desires for secession rose among the Abkhazian intelligentsia as the encroaching Georgian language and populace crept in from Tbilisi, Georgia (Derluguian, 1998). The elites petitioned to Soviet leaders in Moscow in 1956, 1967, and 1978 for secession from the Georgian SSR and direct connection to Russia, but ultimately to no avail (Petersen, 2008). Zverev (1996) does note that the Central Soviet did accede several concessions in policy control to Abkhazia that went around the Georgian control in Tbilisi, creating a sense of autonomy within the Abkhazian government.

The failing Soviet Union and independence movements.

This desire for independence finally came to a head during 1978, when the Abkhaz petition to Moscow ended up with a restructuring of the political and educational systems within Abkhazia under the watch of the Central Soviet (Derluguian, 1998). From here, tensions between Abkhazians and Georgians in both regions would increase as perestroika and glasnost of the late 1980s increased the instability within the USSR. Additionally, the concession of demands to Abkhazia by the Central Soviet angered many of the Georgian intelligentsia (Petersen, 2008). The Soviet Union was slowly disintegrating as nationalization movements formed within both

Georgia and Abkhazia in this time period. The movements argued for separate and distinct forms of state restructuring of the Soviet Union.

Eventually, this led to a growing tear between the two movements. The Abkhazian movement wished to stay within the Soviet Union, while the Georgian movement strove for complete independence as a new nation. In March 1989, Abkhazians met to declare their wish to remain in the Soviet Union, sending a letter signed by 36,000 Abkhazi, including all Abkhazi party leaders, to the Supreme Soviet (Petersen, 2008; Zverev, 1996). The letter, also known as the “Likhny Letter,” demanded a return to the use of the Abkhazian language within the region and a return to the 1925 constitution of an independent Abkhazia (Derluguian, 1998, Petersen, 2008).

The results of this letter coalesced into the first violence of this period. Anti-Abkhazian demonstrations exploded in Tbilisi, Gali, and the Abkhazian capital of Sukhumi, which held a majority Georgian population. The demonstrations quickly turned to the broader, pro-independence movement of Georgia, which culminated in the April 1989 massacre of demonstrators in Tbilisi by Soviet troops. About the incident, notes Petersen (2008, p. 15), “many would contend from here, the [Georgian] nationalist movement and conflict with Abkhazia were irreversible.”

The first inter-ethnic violence between Abkhazians and Georgians occurred in July between Georgian university faculty at Sukhumi University in Abkhazia shortly after the events of April (Petersen 2008). The faculty refused to work with Russian and Abkhazian faculty and established a branch of the Georgian Tbilisi State University therein. Abkhazian nationalists attacked the school building that was supposed to be the site of the University. Sixteen people were killed in the conflict, which caused Soviet leaders in Moscow to leave the two nations to

their own devices, in order to avoid participation within the violence of the suppression of anti-communist movements and due to other conflicts within the Soviet political system at this time. The two legislatures then continued the physical battles in legal declarations against each other (Zverev, 1996; Petersen, 2008).

Georgia led the way forward with democratic independence, paving the way for elections in the country, legalizing opposition parties, although excluding regional based parties like the Abkhazians. A few months later in 1990, the Abkhazian Supreme Soviet established a Declaration of Sovereignty within the USSR, attempting to side itself closer to Soviet homeland (Petersen, 2008; UNPO, 2015). Electors to the Supreme Soviet in Georgia declared Abkhazia under Georgian control later in 1990, while Abkhazia's Supreme Soviet moved forward with its own independent elections, electing Vladislav Ardzinba its chair (Petersen, 2008).

The ethnic tensions and pro-/anti-communist factors within the countries continued to grow as Georgia asserted its independence from the Soviet Union. In 1991, Abkhazia participated in the Soviet referendum to keep the union together, in direct defiance of the Georgian Supreme Soviet. It is important to understand that the native Georgians in Abkhazia did not participate in this referendum, having been banned from doing so by the Georgian Supreme Soviet. Obviously, the rest of Georgia, declaring itself fully autonomous, also did not participate in the referendum. Abkhazia would then go on to protest in the form of a boycott of the election of Georgia's new leader, Zvaizd Gamsakhurdia (Petersen, 2008).

Attempting to head off further conflict, Gamsakhurdia established an ethnically diverse Abkhaz parliament under Georgian power in August 1991, including both Abkhaz and Georgians native to the Abkhaz region (Petersen, 2008). However, this tentative peace did not last, as Gamsakhurdia labeled the elected leader Ardzinba a tool of the enemy Supreme Soviet in

Moscow (Petersen, 2008; Zverev, 1996). Georgian parliamentary members continued to abstain from parliamentary processes within Abkhazia as protest of the Abkhazian nationalist movement. This abstainment moved onto civil disobedience, culminating in an episode where the Abkhazian National Guard attacked the Georgian-held Abkhaz Ministry of Internal Affairs (Petersen, 2008; Zverev, 1996). Ardzinba, in a prophetic move, convinced Moscow to station an air battalion in the capital of Sukhumi amid the escalating tensions (Zverev, 1996).

The tensions reached a peak when, on the 23rd of July, 1992, the Abkhaz Supreme Soviet re-established the 1925 Abkhazian Constitution that declared itself an independent nation-state, without any native Georgian support (Peterson, 2008, UNPO, 2015). Shortly thereafter, a high-ranking Georgian delegation was kidnapped north of Abkhazia by Mingrelian rebels while trying to negotiate with them. It was rumored that the hostages had been moved south to the Gali region of Abkhazia. On August 14th, 1992, Georgian troops, under the orders of Eduard Shevardnadze, entered Sukhumi, the capital of Abkhazia to find the hostages. Violence broke out in Sukhumi between the Georgian and Abkhaz National Guard, with the Georgian National Guard occupying the Abkhaz parliament (Petersen, 2008; Zverev, 1996). The war for Abkhazian independence and Georgian stability was assumed to be quickly settled, with a ceasefire and political settlement among the two nation-states being brokered by the Russian Federation on September 3rd of 1992 (United Nations, 1992). However, this conflict soon exploded into further violence that subsumed the world stage within the United Nations.

This background is necessary to establish the principle *statum narrans* in action within the narrative policy discourse. This background gives the setting that a policy narrative can use to produce an understanding of characters and their relationships, giving aid to the formation and understanding of the policy narratives that international relations scholars can attempt to analyze

using the NPF. Essentially, without the historical background of the conflict, it becomes difficult to understand why Georgia labels Abkhaz Separatists villains consistently or why the Russian Federation and military is so closely involved within the conflict. It gives added clarity to the narratives that are about to be examined within the narrative processes within the United Nations.

Application of IR-Modified NPF

Discourse analysis.

By far and away one of the strongest parts of the Narrative Policy Framework is the lack of empirical suggestion. Therefore, one is able to take a variety of different research methodologies, both qualitative and quantitative, and incorporate the NPF into them. As mentioned earlier, the way nations interact often form connecting networks, much like *homo narrans*'s social networks as indicated by social group primacy by Shanahan, et. al, (2017). The narrative communication that occurs within the United Nations is a perfect translation for discovering these networks of discussion within the *agora narrans*. In this case study, the modified NPF will be highlighted by using discourse analysis, specifically discourse networks, to explore how narrative is processed within the United Nations (UN).

Discourse networks are a format of social network analysis that traces the growth and formation of coalitions within policy debates (Leifeld, 2017). In these networks, political and policy statements that are made publicly are attributed to political actors through their use of media. The network itself traces the political discourse, showing how actors group together or divide over time as their statements regarding the public policy converge together or separate. This can give incredible insight into how the public policy debate occurs over time within a variety of medium, including how actors come together, how they signal coalition formation,

how opinions of actors change over time, and how actors within the policy debate influence other political actors (Leifeld, 2017).

These networks can not only help to understand congruence among actors, but can show clustering of ideas that contribute to the content of the policy debate. The network also shows how these ideas compete within the policy environment over time. The discourse network reveals the complex systems at work within the public policy environment. Hence, for the international relations scholar, the networks will reveal the complex interplay of the *statum narrans* and their respective narratives. The network will look specifically at how the narrative is presented by the different *statum narrans* and the formation of coalitions around congruent narratives within the forum of the UN. Ultimately, pairing the NPF with discourse analysis helps answer the overarching research question, how are narratives processed and handled within international relations, especially within international *fora*, like the United Nations? This will be done by examining five research hypotheses.

Research hypothesis.

Before analysis can occur, some research hypotheticals should be set to be answered. For the purposes of this work, these draw from the NPF theory as applied within an international setting. I propose five hypothesis that can be of use to the international relations scholar using the Narrative Policy Framework.

- Hypothesis 1: *Statum Narrans* use forums like the United Nations at the meso-level of analysis to bring attention to policy problems, such as international conflict.
- Hypothesis 2: International conflict between *statum narrans* can be described by the Narrative Policy Framework through competing policy narratives.
- Hypothesis 3: International cooperation between *statum narrans* can be described by the Narrative Policy framework through congruent policy narratives.

- Hypothesis 4: *Statum Narrans* will use various strategies identified by the Narrative Policy Framework over time to bring their policy to the forefront of the United Nations.
- Hypothesis 5: Power relations can be understood by examining levels of influence of the narrative elements identified by the NPF within the discourse network.

Building networks for analysis.

To examine the discourse networks, UN documents referring to both Georgia and Abkhazia were searched for within the UN archives. The date range for documents collected starts at the beginning of request for international support at the UN following the initial cease fire arranged by Russia and Georgia on September 3, 1992 and ends with December 31st, 1992. All UN documents available on this topic and within this date range in English were then coded by the author. Coding consisted of elements from the NPF: characters, including heroes, villains, and victims, and for a policy solution, which is the minimum for a policy narrative within the guidelines within NPF. A coding table is introduced in Table 1 as an example of coding criteria and statements coded to those criteria.

Each document was uploaded within the Discourse Network Analyzer (DNA) software (Version 2.0; Leifeld, 2018) and statements within the documents were analyzed in the following manner to generate the network. First, the *statum narrans* that made the narrative statement was identified. Second, the concepts within the statement were analyzed and attached to the *statum narrans*, creating the additional variables of characters and policy solution. Both the *statum narrans* and the narrative elements are set as the nodes of the network. Agreement with concept ideas were then tracked to create network linkages, also known as edges, within the discourse network. The final step for building the discourse network was the addition of a time stamp. This allowed for the analysis of the temporal clustering of narrative elements, as well as the growth of the network as *statum narrans* join the narrative debate.

Table 1 - Narrative Elements in United Nations Discourse

Element	Criteria	Example Statement	<i>Statum Narrans</i> Source
Character - Hero	A <i>statum narrans</i> or individual that is named as able to bring about a policy solution	"The redeployment of the armed forces of Georgia from one part of the country to another - in this case Abkhazia - was the only possible solution under the adverse conditions existing at that time."	Georgia
Character - Villain	A <i>statum narrans</i> or individual that is named as doing harm or preventing a policy solution	"In addition, Abkhaz and north Caucasian forces attacked the town of Ochamchira, located some 55 kilometres south-east of Sukhumi."	United Nations Goodwill Mission
Character - Victim	A <i>statum narrans</i> or individual that is harmed by actions of the villains	"In the ports of Gagra and Pitzunda more than 800 selectively Georgian nationals were executed during the last three to four days."	Georgia
Policy Solution	The proposed actions to be taken to solve the policy problem	"We propose that the parties agree on a transitional special 'Cooling-off period'"	Russia

Once built, the networks were then exported for visualization with the Visone software (Visone Development Team, 2017). A variety of discourse networks were then created using different variables as nodes to produce a multi-variate analysis of the entire political discourse, using standard descriptive network analysis techniques (Wassermann & Faust, 1994). Each graph was pulled from the same database of statements as every other graph. The following results and discussion give an example of how the international scholar might use the Narrative Policy Framework, combined with discourse analysis, to track and understand international relations.

Results and Discussion

Hypothesis one.

Statum Narrans use forums like the United Nations at the meso-level of analysis to bring attention to policy problems, such as international conflict.

Given that there are several variables to map, a variety of networks were created to understand each variable. However, to start, two networks of connections between each *statum narrans* and their characters and policy solution were created. In Figure 1, there are two node types, the first being the *statum narrans* and the second being characters mentioned within their narratives analyzed during the time period. The characters themselves are divided color-wise into heroes, victims, and villains. A linkage is created when a *statum narrans* mentions a character in a document or speech given at the United Nations. In Figure 2, there are again two node types differentiated by color, showing the *statum narrans* and the policy solutions. Similar to the first, a linkage is created between nodes when a *statum narrans* mentions a specific call to policy action in a document or speech. In each graph, the frequency of the *statum narrans* or mention as a character increases the node size, while the edges between them gain width as the linkage between the two occur more frequently.

As can clearly be seen, there are a multitude of *statum narrans* involved in the policy discourse. Considering each node of *statum narrans* is linked to both a character and a policy solution, it is easy to conclude that, empirically, the United Nations is being used as a forum at the meso-level. In other words, the *statum narrans* are producing, receiving, and contesting narratives within the *agora narrans* of the UN.

conflict. This carries over into the linkages that Georgia has, with the strongest edge weight among the edges being that with their narrative statement about Abkhaz separatists being the villain. Within Georgia's narrative, Abkhazian separatists contribute the most towards the policy problem (conflict), though the villains with the highest centralities are all mentioned by the dominating Georgia. This is interesting because these are only really linked to the Georgian node, suggesting that Georgia is attempting to characterize these characters as villains, but might not be accepted by other *statum narrans* participating within the discourse.

The node with the third largest degree of centrality is interesting as it is the United Nations Goodwill Mission (also referred to as Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General or UN Observers). This has implications regarding the use of the United Nations as a forum at the meso-level. Considering that the Goodwill Mission was sent to the conflict zone to observe and report on the situation, it as a *statum narrans* attempts to create the most neutral narrative, thus referencing claims of characters on both sides of the conflict, leading to its natural spot as having high centrality. This also is confirmatory that the United Nations figures prominently as a forum, where connections are formed between *statum narrans* contesting narratives within it, as their edges find common space with all the other narrators.

Moving onto the policy network in Figure 2, it appears similar to Figure 1. Georgia and Abkhazia are once again central to producing policy solutions within narratives, exhibiting similar contrasting viewpoints. As the combination of these two graphs create the full policy narrative network, the congruence shows that, indeed, the *statum narrans*, are telling full narratives by definition of the NPF within the United Nations. They include at least one character and one policy solution (Shanahan, et. al, 2015). Georgia has the highest degree centrality, and as

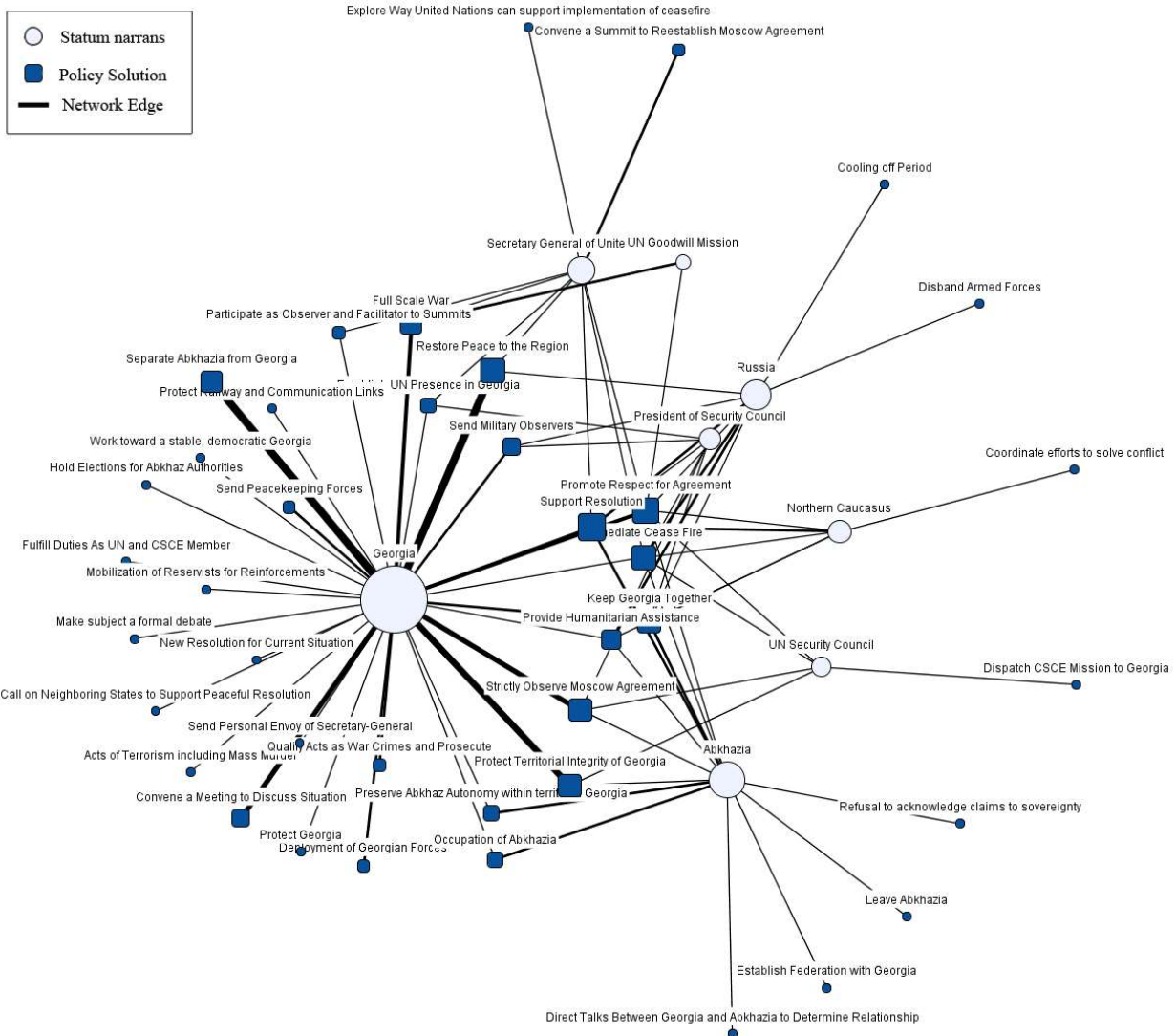


Figure 2. Two-way policy statement/status narrans network of the Georgia-Abkhazia conflict. Larger nodes and thicker edges indicate greater frequency.

such, is the most frequent narrator within the network. This suggests that it has the most ties to a host of policy solutions, which makes Georgia the most effective policy entrepreneur within the policy debate. Abkhazia comes next, creating separate policy solutions in an attempt to settle the conflict.

Among the policy solutions, the call to support the Moscow Ceasefire Agreement seems to top the list. It is mentioned most frequently and has the highest number of edges, suggesting that the vast majority of the *status narrans* in the conflict are calling on others to support and

enforce the agreement. As this agreement is a groundwork for settlement of the conflict, it is unsurprising that Georgia, Abkhazia, Russia, and the United Nations security council all reference it as a possible solution. Unfortunately, the conflict continues because of continued villainization of the *statum narrans* in conflict, as seen in Figure 1, and additions to the policy solutions, creating a more difficult environment for settling the conflict as each side increases their requirements for a settlement.

Clearly, the information contained within the discourse networks of the Georgian and Abkhazian conflict suggest that policy narratives, as identified earlier, are being told within the international community. In this case, the theory of the Narrative Policy Framework regarding the levels of analysis holds true when shifted to the international level, providing a clear understanding of the competing narratives within an international conflict. Additionally, the evidence provided by creating the discourse networks suggest that these narratives are being told within an environment similar to the *agora narrans*. Thus, it clearly confirms Hypothesis One. The United Nations is a meso-level forum for international policy narratives used by *statum narrans* in an attempt to bring attention to not only the policy problems by creating a diverse cast of characters, but also a myriad of policy solutions to solve these problems. As policy solutions between *statum narrans* line up, the international scholar can learn about each entity's views towards the settlement of the conflict.

Hypothesis two and three.

Hypothesis 2: International conflict between statum narrans can be described by the Narrative Policy Framework through competing policy narratives.

Hypothesis 3: International cooperation between statum narrans can be described by the Narrative Policy framework through congruent policy narratives.

As initially seen in Figures 1 and 2, the networks of the policy narratives often find agreement and disagreement between the *statum narrans*. This gives insight into the international conflict as told by participants within the conflict. Specifically, by charting the congruence or conflict in the network between the *statum narrans* within their policy beliefs, the international relations scholar can understand points of conflict and agreement in policy and understanding. In the case of congruence, it creates a network where the linkages, or edges, are formed when both *statum narrans* agree or disagree about the indication of the character. For example, if Georgia and Russia both state that the Security Council has a role to play as a hero, it will create a link between the two; the more it occurs, the stronger the link. In the case of a conflict network, this link is only formed when one node of the dyad of *statum narrans* agrees on a character or policy solution and the other does not. The best example is the disagreement between Georgia and Russia on the vilification of Russia's military forces, where Georgia agrees to the character concept, but Russia denies it, positioning its armed forces as a hero instead.

Like the networks presented in Figures 1 and 2, Figures 3-6 use nodes to indicate the *statum narrans* giving the narrative and edges indicate both characters (Figures 3 and 4) and policy solutions (Figures 5 and 6). Figures 3 and 4 are the conflict networks between the *statum narrans* in characters and policy solutions, respectively. Again, this is where one *statum narrans* disagrees on the narrative concept with the other *statum narrans* it is connected to. Figures 5 and 6 are the congruence networks between the *statum narrans* in characters and policy solutions respectively. Again, this is when the *statum narrans* both agree or disagree on a character or policy solution.

Unlike the networks in Figures 1 and 2, the current set of figures are normalized per Leifeld, Gruber, and Bossner (2018) to counteract the power of prominence within the statements. In the first two networks, Georgia had a much higher frequency of statements than any other *statum narrans*, giving it a much larger node area than those who might not have made as many statements. Normalization allows for a clearer picture of the true coalitions within the two networks. In this case, it allows for better understanding of the coalition formations in respect to diversity and activity of the members. I turn my attention first to the conflict networks.

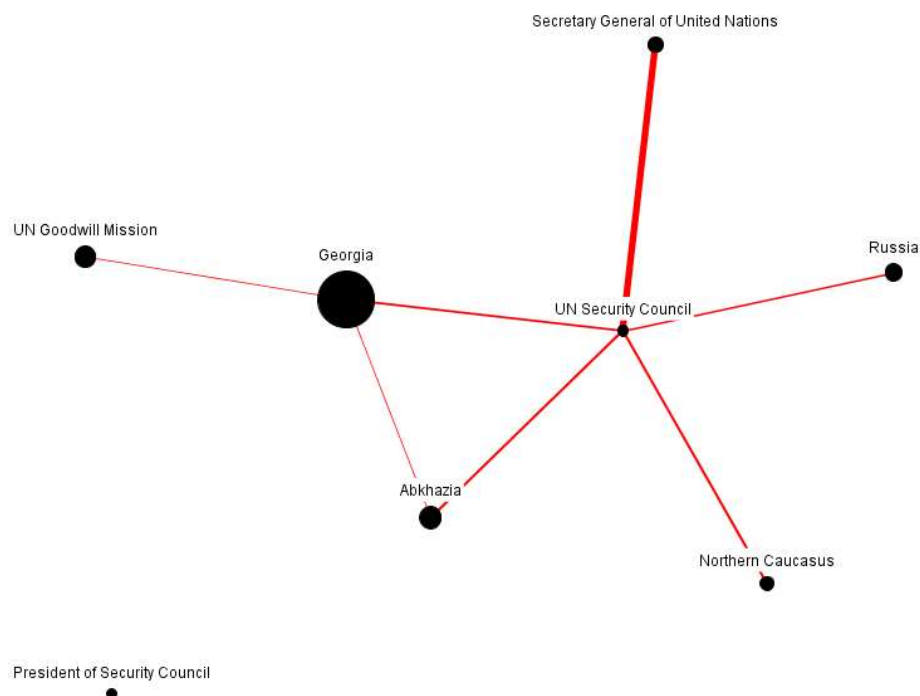


Figure 3. Character conflict network of the Georgia-Abkhazia conflict. Larger nodes indicate greater frequency of narration, while thicker edges indicate greater conflict.

Figure 3 shows the conflict on how *statum narrans* view the characters found within the narrative discourse. Despite what might initially be thought of as a conflict in character recognition between Georgia and Abkhazia, there are actually very few times when the two do not agree on characterization within their policy narratives. However, I believe there is a clear explanation for this. In reading the actual documentation, Abkhazia rarely made direct statements within the United Nations. When they did, it was often through the United Nations Goodwill

Mission. Given this, there was little opportunity for the Abkhazians to refute the narrative being put forth by Georgia, so it is only a few times when their narratives specifically addressed similar character topics as one another. It is possible that with the inclusion of more cases within the larger *agora narrans* of all media, this conflict network edge may grow thicker.

However, there are clear narrative differences in characterization between Abkhazia and the Security Council, the Secretary-General and the Security Council, and the Security Council and the Northern Caucasus. Explanatorily, this suggests that characterization among these have a high conflict. The strongest edge of conflict is between the second set, suggesting that the greatest narrative contestation occurs between the Security Council and the Secretary General.

This presents an interesting dynamic among the *statum narrans* that was not initially apparent when reading the narratives, which suggested a close working relationship between the two. It also suggests that, even within organizations, there can be disagreement within the narratives; hence why it is important to consider the individual level of analysis while analyzing these narratives.

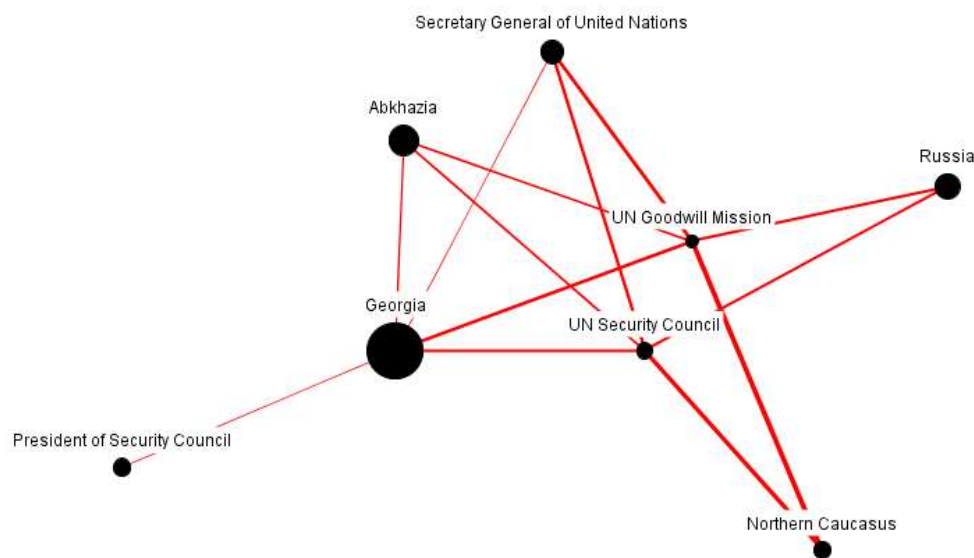


Figure 4. Policy solution conflict network of the Georgia-Abkhazia conflict. Larger nodes indicate greater frequency of narration, while thicker edges indicate greater conflict.

Moving on, Figure 4 shows that there is much more conflict on policy solutions within the narratives. This means that the *statum narrans* have wide ranging disagreement on how to solve the conflict. Referencing back to Figure 2, while there are strong ties between the *statum narrans* and mentioned policy solutions, Figure 4 shows just how little they may agree on these solutions. Within the parties of the conflict, the greatest disagreement comes between the dyad of the Goodwill Mission and the Northern Caucasus. This indicates that the policy solutions with these two are the most different. This is likely because the Northern Caucasus is represented almost solely within the initial ceasefire, where it is agreeable between the nations, but does not involve the Goodwill mission, which paints the Northern Caucasus as an active blockage to settling the conflict. It is worth noting that there is little conflict within the policy solutions of Georgia and the Secretary-General, suggesting strong agreement on the best way to resolve the conflict. As the Secretary-General is most likely to suggest solutions that are acceptable within international norms, agreement between the dyad most likely suggests that the Georgian policy solutions are those most likely to be palatable to the international community at large. Between the Figures 3 and 4, however, it becomes easy to recognize that the *statum narrans* do not always agree, suggesting that there is contestation between their narratives. This further confirms Hypothesis Two: international entities produce conflicting narratives that they use to interact with each other. These narratives are representative of the actual physical conflict, seeing disagreement among the policy solutions and the definition of characters. In this case, one *statum narrans*' villain literally is another's hero, as seen in how Abkhazia regards Georgia as an oppressor within the situation, but Georgia paints itself as having power to enforce solutions;

however, there might not be as much difference as initially suspected between the participants in the conflict.

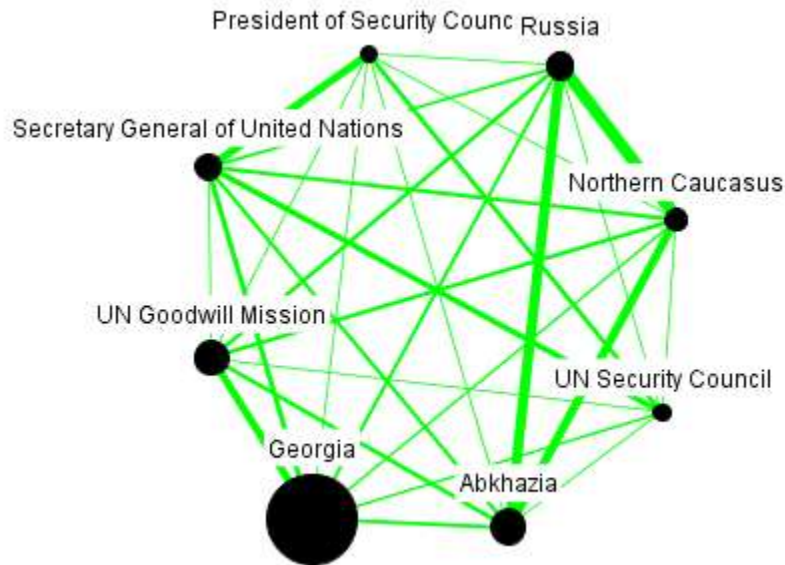


Figure 5. Character congruence network of the Georgia-Abkhazia conflict. Larger nodes indicate greater frequency of narration, while thicker edges indicate stronger congruence.

Similarly, for Hypothesis Three, Figures 5 and 6 represent congruence within the narratives being told. Again, the congruence network creates an edge when both *statum narrans* either agree or disagree. Knowing this, it is interesting to see such a complete network with edges between all nodes in Figure 5. This reveals a lot of congruence between narratives; even among the conflicting parties. As noted earlier, the possibility that the initial ceasefire, which expresses a large amount of agreement among the characterization in the narrative, bears significantly on the formation of the network.

Regardless, there are some relationships that can be gleaned by the international scholar. Primarily, it is interesting to note the triad of Russia, Abkhazia, and the North Caucasus. They form a strong community with large amounts of agreement between them. As Abkhazia and the North Caucasus are clearly identified as supporting each other within several of the narratives, it comes as no surprise that their characterizations line up. The odd one out in this triumvirate is Russia, which claims within their narrative that they are studiously neutral within the conflict. However, as the conflict progresses, Georgia claims that Russia is not neutral, but the armed forces are aiding the Abkhaz and North Caucasus forces. The congruence networks on characterization reveal that Georgia's narrative claim may very well have been closest to the true intention of the Russian "Peacekeepers" rather than that of Russia itself. By untangling the web of narrative, the international scholar can garner insight closer to the objective truth than what is put forward in varying accounts of the conflict.

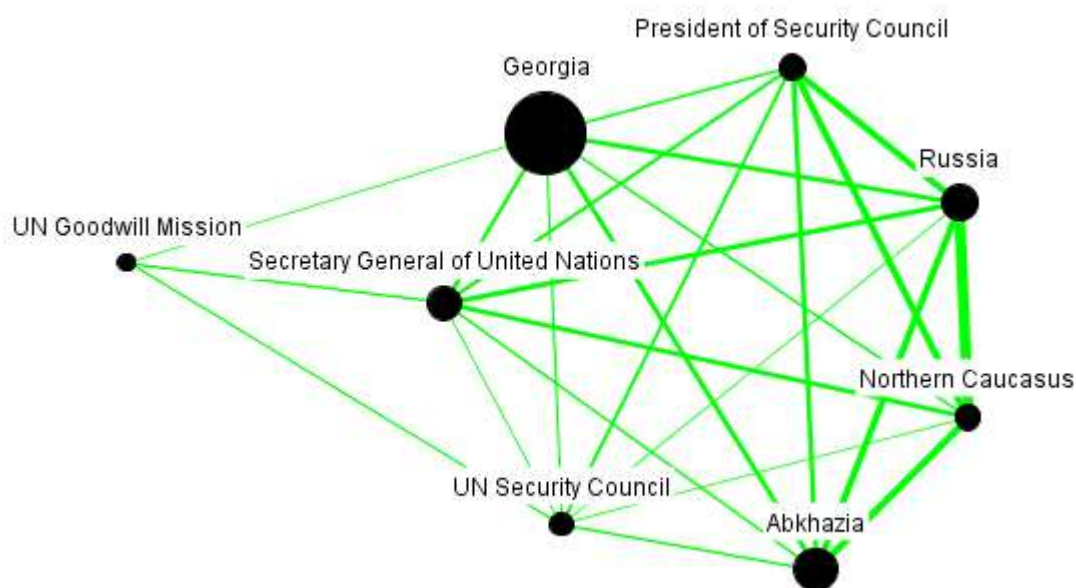


Figure 6. Policy solutions congruence network of the Georgia-Abkhazia conflict. Larger nodes indicate greater frequency of narration, while thicker edges indicate stronger congruence.

Figure 6 sheds even more lights on the relations of the *statum narrans*. Again, there is strong agreement between the triad of Russia, Abkhazia, and the Northern Caucasus. This

relationship only furthers confirmation that there are similar policy beliefs among these three *statum narrans* within the conflict. However, it should also be noted that there is another triad of the President of the Security Council, Russia, and the Northern Caucasus. Their congruent narrative policy solutions come mainly from the acknowledgement of the Moscow ceasefire. However, it does cast some doubt on the case of Russia entirely being supportive of the Abkhaz separatists, where Russia is in agreement with the Security Council for the policy of protecting Georgia's territorial integrity. This is further confirmed by the fact that Georgia, when calling out the Russian Armed Forces, states that it is because of reactionary forces of the Russian Parliament attempting to wrest control from President Boris Yeltsin. Ordinarily, this would appear to be an attempt to expand the victims of the conflict with its inclusion, but it serves to point out, once again, that *statum narrans* are not entirely a singular entity in accord, as there was conflict within the Russian government between Communists and Democratic supporters.

The Security Council is interesting within the congruency network. It maintains a minimal level of congruency with nearly every other *statum narrans*, suggesting that the Security Council is appearing to remain studiously neutral in their agreement with policy solutions, save those of the President of the Security Council. This does make it seem as if the Security Council actually has little to put in towards solving the conflict, especially seen in light of the strength of congruency ties from the Secretary-General. It would seem then, that the congruence with the Secretary-General has a stronger effect within the narrative network than the Security Council. This would indicate that the Secretary General is more likely to intercede with policy solutions within the policy process during international conflict than the Security Council.

Between the two figures, it becomes clear where *statum narrans* are cooperating within the international system. Those who have similar characters and policy solutions are likely to be

working together within the international system to solve the conflict. In this case, Georgia allies itself most closely with the Secretary-General, who is most likely to intercede within the international system in their behalf. The case of Russia is very interesting, as it reflects a division within the nation that is not immediately visible from analysis of their own narrative. Regardless, it is clear that hypothesis three is correct: the congruent narrative policy networks give the international relations scholar an objective glimpse into international cooperation.

Hypothesis four.

Statum Narrans will use various strategies identified by the Narrative Policy Framework over time to bring their policy to the forefront of the United Nations.

Moving onward, Hypothesis Four introduces a time element to the graph series. Each graph in Figures 7-10 shows how the network changes cumulatively in one-month periods of narrative communication. Once again, these are two-way graphs where one set of nodes is the *statum narrans* and the other the characters referenced in the narrative statements. The frequency of the *statum narrans* dictates node size and number of references between the *statum narrans* and the character dictates the weight of the edge between them. The creation of the networks gives an idea of the narrative strategies being used by the *statum narrans* over time.

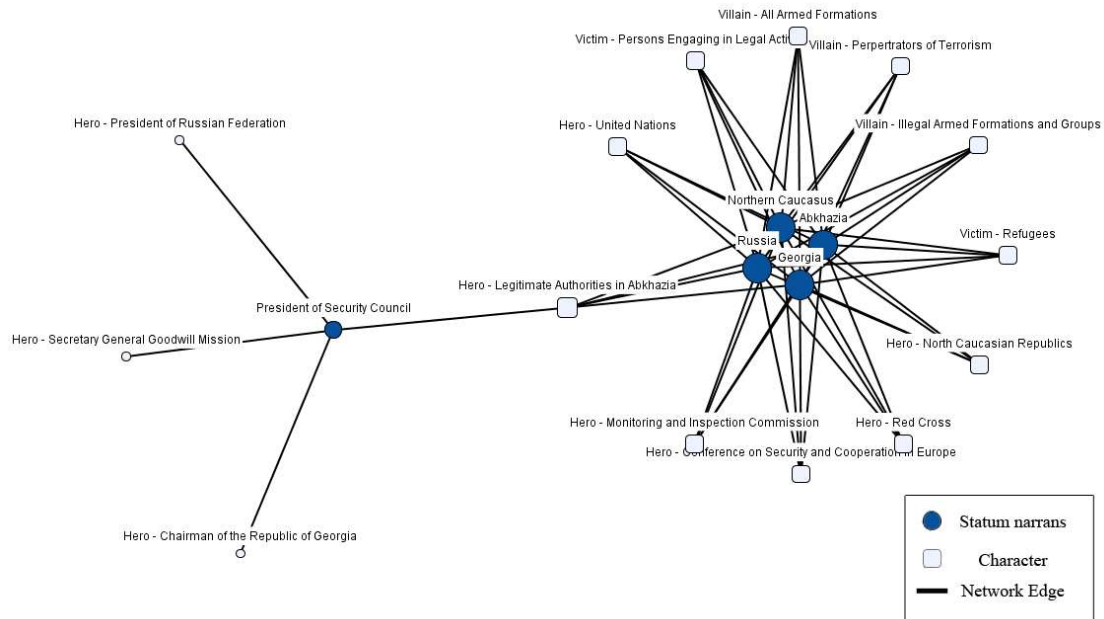
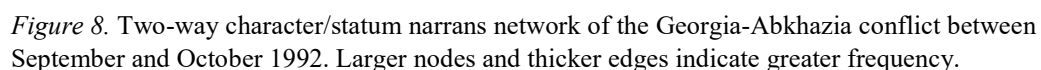
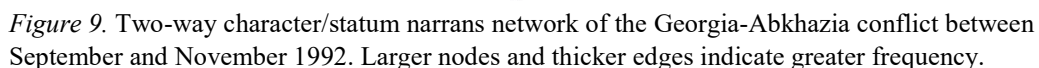


Figure 7. Two-way character/status narrans network of the Georgia-Abkhazia conflict during September 1992. Larger nodes and thicker edges indicate greater frequency.

Initially, the network begins small in Figure 7. Only five *status narrans* are present within the policy discourse during the first month. The activity is limited almost entirely to the four nations involved within the ceasefire, which is also recognized by the President of the Security Council, hence his inclusion within the narrative network. It should come as no surprise that the policy process starts small and with the *status narrans* in agreement. The first transition between the regional conflict to a global stage is hinted at by the ceasefire agreement being supported by the President of the Security Council. This support opens the door for Georgia to bring the conflict to the forefront of the policy debate. Interestingly, it appears that the four *status narrans* use the process of angel shift, naming more heroes to emphasize their ability to solve the policy problem. Since it is a policy solution that is about to be implemented (partway through Laswell's (1953) process), it is no surprise that the focus of the narrative shifts towards those implementing the solution.





The continued conflict produces similar expansions in the third and fourth month (Figures 9 and 10). In the third month, the UN Goodwill Mission returns and reports on the situation. This sets up an interesting dynamic where both parties are vilified for actions taken during the conflict, as well as being praised as heroes for their ability to be able to provide the solution to the conflict. This may seem idiosyncratic, but the parties must both agree and implement the Moscow Ceasefire Agreement, which is still touted by all of the institutional *statum narrans* as the best outcome for peace. The fourth month results in a full network graph, with Georgia making most of the pleas within the United Nations. Georgia continued to expand the victims and villains in a multitude of ways to draw in the focus of the international community. Their initial strategy of angel-shift changes drastically towards the devil-shift, portraying the opposition, including Abkhazian separatists, Russian reactionary forces, and North Caucasian mercenaries, as more brutal and having a greater malicious intent. This is apparent through the larger number of villain nodes connected to Georgia than hero nodes, as well as stronger edge weights between those villains.

By examining the networks over time, it is possible for the international scholar to understand *statum narrans*' narrative policy strategies. This becomes helpful in understanding how nation-states and other international actors will react to various situations, including interstate conflict. The international scholar can best track the relations and understand how policy problems come to the forefront of the international agenda, especially when there are so many issues vying for a spot. In the case of Hypothesis Four, it is concluded that *statum narrans* use specific narrative strategies identified within the Narrative Policy Framework to bring

international conflict and other policy problems to the forefront of the international policy agenda.

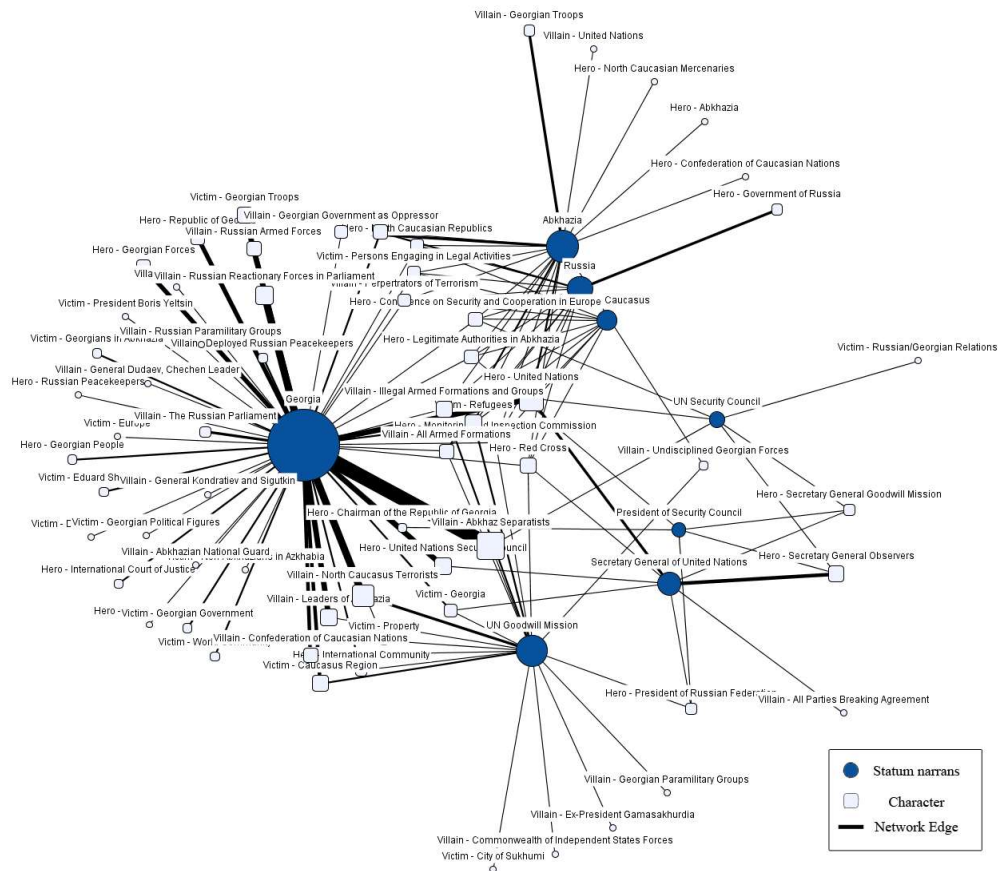


Figure 10. Two-way character/status narrans network of the Georgia-Abkhazia conflict between September and December 1992. Larger nodes and thicker edges indicate greater frequency.

Hypothesis five.

Power relations can be understood by examining levels of influence of the narrative elements identified by the NPF within the discourse network.

The final hypothesis revolves around one of the most important concepts for the international scholar: power. Here, the observations can be realized among the graphs already produced. Within each, there are measurements attributed to the ability to create influence within

the narrative network. Influence means power, therefore, the stronger the measure of influence, the more power an individual *statum narrans* has within the network. This method of measurement is known as eigenvector centrality. For measuring eigenvector centrality, the international scholar should use the full narrative networks, hence referring back to Figures 1 and 2.

Because the networks each measure different connections, the eigenvector centrality will measure different modes of influence. Eigenvector centrality in Figure 1 measures the power of *statum narrans* to define the characters, which goes a long way towards informing the causal mechanisms and overall plot definition of a narrative. Having power to set up the hero and the villain is immeasurable in front of an international audience, giving leverage within the discourse that provides weight towards the implementation of the policy solutions the *statum narrans* give within their narrative. Georgia has double the eigenvector centrality value than the second highest, Abkhazia, with 8.26 and 3.79 respectively. In this case, within the United Nations forum, Georgia wields significant power in controlling the narrative. This power translates into the ability to bring other *statum narrans* into the policy discussion, as was emphasized by the timeline supporting Hypothesis Four. For the international relations scholar, power over narrative expansion quite easily means adding additional members to your coalition.

Additionally, the eigenvector centrality is key to understanding which characters are most referenced within the network. The higher the eigenvector centrality, the more preferred the definition of the character among the *statum narrans* within the discussion. As discussed above, being named a hero gives power among international elites, while being named a villain makes getting a favored policy solution much, much harder. Hence, being named a type of character can raise or lower the power that comes with it. The hero with the highest eigenvector centrality is

the International Red Cross. While this may seem out of place, the policy solution linked to the Red Cross is providing humanitarian aid to the civilian casualties of the violence in the conflict, a factor that almost every *statum narrans* agrees upon, even in the middle of conflict. The villain with the highest eigenvector centrality are illegal armed formations and groups. Interestingly, this does not specify who the groups belong to, which may be why its agreement is most widespread. It creates a faceless bogeyman that any *statum narrans* can use to justify its policy solutions. After all, they are illegal and, hence, acting outside of the laws of the nation-states and the norms of the international community. Finally, the victim with the highest amount of eigenvector centrality are the refugees. This comes as some surprise, as naming them as a victim disempowers the group and raises their vulnerability. However, within the international system, refugees often have little power to even join within the policy discussion, let alone suggest policy solutions. For the international scholar, these power relationships matter greatly.

In Figure 2, eigenvector centrality measures the influence a *statum narrans* has over the policy solutions being shopped around the forum for the *statum narrans* and the most agreed upon policy solution by those involved within the policy discourse. Once again, because of its domination within the expansion as its narrative strategy, Georgia has the highest eigenvector centrality in this network. Considering that Georgia has suggested many possible solutions a great many times within the United Nations forum, its backing of these solutions give it considerable influence within the policy debate. It would not be surprising to see the United Nations implement its policy suggestions during the conflict.

The second eigenvector measure is on the policy solutions themselves. The highest eigenvector centrality value suggests the most agreeable policy solution among all the *statum narrans* within the discourse network. For the Georgia-Abkhaz conflict network, the policy

solution with the highest eigenvector centrality value is to restore peace to the Caucasus region. Like many policy solutions, this call to action is vague and has little definition to what the actual actions to bring it about are, much like many of the calls to action within national policy debates. This vagueness gives it acceptability among a large number of policy actors, creating the largest policy coalition for taking action upon it. The largest coalition often has the most power to be able to implement their policy solution, so being aligned with that coalition gives the *statum narrans* power within the international system.

The narrative gives power within the international system, especially within policy debate. A *statum narrans* may dominate the discussion, affecting the perceptions of leaders in nation-states that might not initially work towards a policy solution. It allows *statum narrans* to initiate coalitions by expanding the narrative to include new characters. It allows *statum narrans* to define who has the power to problem solve, who used the power incorrectly to cause the problem, and who has no power as a victim. For the international scholar, or any political scientist for that matter, understanding who has the power and how it is wielded is one of the top priorities for analysis. A tool that cannot be used to analyze power within the international system is no tool at all. Thankfully, the conclusion on Hypothesis Five is that the Narrative Policy Framework can be used to examine the power between various *statum narrans* and the narratives themselves.

To cap the case study, the Georgian *statum narrans* is considered to have won the conflict, being able to maintain its territorial integrity within the international sphere. Abkhazia still maintains its appeal to independence, though it is only acknowledged by a select few nation-states within the United Nations, primarily by Russia. Given that Georgia's narrative appeared to dominate the conflict's policy discussion, it is no surprise that its preferred policy solution was

the one that won out. Analysis of the data within the policy discourse networks pointed towards this conclusion, giving a fairly accurate prediction as to what would come from the discourse and implementation of the policy.

Limitations on the Results

Not all documents concerning the conflict are available within the United Nations archives, due to a limitation on the length of record-keeping within the digital library. Additionally, some documents reference previous statements made by the *statum narrans* within other *fora* at the meso-level that are not included within the United Nations archives. This does limit the establishment of a full narrative setting and plot for the NPF to analyze. Because of this, the focus is on the characters and policy solutions as stated above. Some documents were not available in English, leading to their exclusion from the case study. Even among the English documents, many were translated from their original languages (Georgian, French, Russian, among others). It is possible that there are narrative cues that are lost from those documents not in English, as well as nuances on understanding lost within translation. However, given the agreement between the networks, it is doubtful that the basic understandings of characterization are affected by any translation issues.

Finally, the coding was performed by a single individual, in which subjective elements like semantic analysis to determine the status of character (hero, villain, victim) can be flawed without intercoder operations. However, for the case study presented here, the semantics are very clear in relation to the characters, making it less subjective. Often, the characters are repeated within the narrative between documents, producing very obvious semantic cues to guide

analysis. It should not affect the final output of the case study, but is still a limitation that could be overcome in further research with the introduction of more coders.

Conclusion

To conclude, this thesis addressed the research question: How are narratives processed and handled within international relations, especially within international *fora*, like the United Nations?

First, the research has shown that the international relations scholar has access to many theoretical tools with which to come to an understanding of the interrelationship between actors within the international system, as well as the international system itself. However, the tools for narrative analysis that are currently available are theoretically weak and are not able to empirically and objectively provide models for international relations. Given the importance of narrative to human culture and understanding, including the understanding of the *homo narrans*, the need for an appropriate, successful tool that bridges the gap between positivism and post-positivism is imperative for the field of international relations. To this end, the Narrative Policy Framework was introduced from the public policy field.

The NPF itself was designed entirely for use within a singular nation-state, looking at the models of how a nation-state's government moves towards making policy from the anarchic policy arena. However, the anarchy of the policy arena matches incredibly closely to that which is found within the international system. Therefore, for the international scholar, the NPF needed modifications to handle more functions at the international level. Possibly the most important of these changes is the introduction of the *statum narrans*, or the idea of actors within the system. It truly encapsulates the *homo narrans* described by Shanahan et. al (2017), while additionally adding to it that representatives of states, non-state actors, and even institutions can be

considered part of the narrative characters. The symbolism used within it is strong, as actors within the international narrative encompass a wider range of players than at the national level. Further, the NPF is modified by the definition of policy. In the international case, what *statum narrans* choose to do or not do, even at low levels of politics like trade and diplomacy, consists of policy, as the entirety of Laswell's (1956) policy decision-making framework can be found as representatives of the *statum narrans* take action at behest of their groups. Finally, the NPF is shifted away from the national level to an international level. It begins by framing the individual level looking at *statum narrans*, regional and international *fora* such as the United Nations as the meso-level, and finally, humanity defining decisions and treaties that form the construct basis of the international system as approached by the international theory being used to analyze.

Overall, with these changes, the International Relations – Modified Narrative Policy Framework found itself able to apply to questions that must be answered by any theory of international relations. Specifically, the NPF successfully gave explanation to how nation-states and other actors use the international system, especially in policy debates (Hypothesis 1), gave explanatory consideration to why nation-states focus on conflict or cooperation within any policy action (Hypotheses 2 and 3), how nation-states can successfully expand their narrative to solicit cooperation or encourage conflict within the international system (Hypothesis 4), which leads to the ultimate explanation necessary for a theory to take flight in international relations: how power in the international system among nation-states is established and wielded (Hypothesis 5).

Accordingly, the case study proved the above hypotheses through the use of discourse network analysis, which had never been used with the Narrative Policy Framework. Not only can networks be developed that help to untie the international narrative from many narrators, but discourse analysis can be used to dig towards the truth of the events being narrated by different

sides. The NPF works well with the discourse network analysis, further enhancing the methodological plasticity of the NPF and its success as a positivist evaluation tool. The visual nature of the methodology allows for extended investigation of participating *statum narrans*, tracking the convergence and divergence of narrative between *statum narrans*, even within institutions, and understanding coalition formation and interaction. This is helpful not only for the international relations scholar, but also for the public policy scholar, who can adapt this methodology to the local, state, or national policy arenas to great success.

With these hypotheses answered, the research question is also thus answered. Narratives are an integral part of international relations and thus need to be a focus of study for the international relations scholar. Narratives are used in a similar fashion at the international level for promotion of policy and action as they are at a national level. Similar enough, that a tool for the national policy narratives, the Narrative Policy Framework, can be engaged and used to understand how international narratives work. Narratives are received, told, and contested through a variety of media and *fora* by those who wish to affect change at a global level, the *statum narrans*. By looking at a critical conflict in state-building history, this thesis worked to apply the Narrative Policy Framework to the international narratives and narrative environment within the United Nations, which, again, performs very similarly to the *agora narrans* of the meso-level national level framework.

The Narrative Policy Framework's power is unmatched in giving increased depth and understanding of international relations in a variety of contexts. Realistically, the IR-Modified NPF can be used to find the convergence of policy solutions in complex international situations, providing a roadmap of possible small solutions to build towards trust-building. The linking component of the network allows for visual confirmation of agreed upon policy solutions that

may not be obvious during the policy debate, giving policy makers additional opportunity to come to agreement. The networks additionally allow for visual identification of characters and their integration into the narrative itself, making it easier for the international relations scholar to identify key *statum narrans* and their power relationships, which can become confusing while dealing with conflicting narratives in an international violent conflict. The narrative mapping in a visual space presents differently, especially when using network statistics to grow

Additionally, because of the strength of narrativity to the human condition, use of the NPF to analyze policy can circumvent translation and cultural errors which can creep between languages when *statum narrans* interact. This strength against translation issues allows for clearer analysis by international relations scholars, as well as between the nation-states themselves. Also, because of the visual element, the translation can be improved to understand the connections between *statum narrans*, giving visual confirmation of translations or highlighting mistranslations.

Further research on the discourse networks themselves may reveal more workings, especially when considering the possibility of introducing temporal exponential random graph model, which allows for traditional statistical testing of hypotheses. Additionally, further research should focus on how coalitions use narrative strategies at an international level, as the broadening of the base with the “loser’s strategy” at the national level seemed to create a winning coalition for Georgia, suggesting that how *statum narrans* handle their narrative strategy may differ from the national level. Additionally, more thorough and well-developed networks should include further languages and media outlets to get a truly global idea of the narratives of conflict. The discourse networks should also seek to replicate the full NPF description of narrative, connecting the setting, characters, plot, and policy solutions together in a single

experiment to demonstrate the effectiveness of the NPF at more than a basic discourse network level. The research herein touches only briefly to describe the possible effects of applying the IR-Modified NPF, further study is not only warranted, but thoroughly needed within the international relations community. Thus concludes this thesis, with the suggestion that other international scholars learn to use the Narrative Policy Framework as the powerful investigatory tool it truly is.

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