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**Discourse Analysis of Diplomatic Correspondence Between Kennedy and Khrushchev during the Cuban Missile Crisis:
Identifying Dominant Narratives and Discourses Influencing Diplomatic Negotiations**

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Abstract

The following paper uses post-structural approach to analyse how American discourse on Cuban missile crisis influenced diplomatic negotiations between the President of the United States, John F. Kennedy and the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Nikita Khrushchev. The analysis includes correspondence from October 16th to October 28th, 1962, in a total of fifteen letters. The paper engages with Kennedy's perceptions of reality and the use of language as socially constructed pattern. Paper provides threefold analysis to examine how American discourse, values and ideologies manifested in language use during the diplomatic correspondence influenced negotiations between Kennedy and Khrushchev. First, the article identifies dominant narratives in American political discourse, then examines how these dominant discourses were manifested in diplomatic correspondence, and finally, attempts to examine how American domestic narratives influenced interpretation and understanding of the events during the crisis. The paper focuses on semantic aspects of the conversation between the two leaders, power dynamics, use of language and the narrative performed in order to transmit the message. Using Critical Discourse Analyses, the author aims to identify power relations instituted in the correspondence at the discursive level.

Keywords: *Poststructuralism, Cuban Missile Crisis, Discourse analyses, diplomatic correspondence, discourse*

აბსტრაქტი

წარმოდგენილი ნაშრომის მიზანია პოსტ-სტრუქტურალისტური მიდგომის გამოყენებით შეისწავლოს ამერიკული დისკურსის გავლენა დიპლომატიურ მიმოწერაზე კენედისა და ხრუშოვის შორის კუბის (იგივე კარიბის) კრიზისის დროს. ანალიზი მოიცავს კარიბის კრიზისის პერიოდში, კერძოდ, 1962 წლის 16 ოქტომბრიდან 28 ოქტომბრის ჩათვლით გაგზავნილ და მიღებულ ყველა წერილს (ჯამში თხუთმეტი).

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ნაშრომის მიზანია გაანალიზოს კენედის წამოღვენი არსებული მოვლენების და რეალობის მიმართ, მის მიერ გამოყენებული ენობრივი სტრუქტურები როგორც სოციალურად კონსტრუირებული პატერნი. ამისათვის, ავტორი ცდილობს გამოამჟღავნოს ამერიკულ პოლიტიკურ დისკურსში გავრცელებული დომინანტი ნარატივები, განიხილოს თუ როგორ არის წარმოდგენილი ეს ნარატივები დიპლომატიურ კორესპონდენციაში და ბოლოს, დაადგინოს, რა გავლენა იქონიეს ამ ნარატივებმა კარიბის კრიზისის დროს მოვლენათა გავებასა და ინტერპრეტაციაზე. ნაშრომი ორიენტირებულია კენედისა და ხრუშოვის შორის მიმოწერის სემანტიკურ ასპექტებზე, წერილებში გამომჟღავნებულ ძალაუფლებრივ დინამიკაზე, ენის გამოყენებასა და პერფორმირებულ ნარატივებზე. ავტორი იყენებს დისკურსის კრიტიკულ ანალიზს რათა ყურადღება გაამახვილოს დისკურსულ დონეზე მიმოწერაში გამომდგომებულ ძალაუფლებრივ ურთიერთობებზე.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: პოსტსტრუქტურალიზმი, კარიბის კრიზისი, დისკურსანალიზი, დიპლომატიური კორესპონდენცია

Introduction

The Cuban missile crisis was the most dangerous direct confrontation between two superpowers when the United States of America and the Soviet Union came to the brink of a nuclear war. Under the pretext of protecting Cuba from United States' intervention, Soviet and Cuban leaders – Nikita Khrushchev and Fidel Castro made a secret agreement, and Soviets started the installation of medium and intermediate-range ballistic missiles in Cuba (Colman 2016). The decision was not only bound to protect Cuba but also to give the Soviet Union an upper hand in strategic balance with the USA. Missiles if launched from Cuba, would pose an immediate threat to the United States while complicating American first-strike capabilities (Freedman 2000: 163). In August 1962, American U-2 aircraft spotted air defence missiles in Cuba, causing escalation of the situation between United States and the Soviet Union.

Cuban missile crisis was the period characterised by intense communications and miscommunications between the Kremlin and the White House. From October 16 to October 28 of 1962, Kennedy and Khrushchev exchanged approximately 15 letters; the content of those letters varies from attempts of de-escalation of the situation to assertive demands and confrontations.

Number of scholars have approached the Cuban missile crisis from various different perspectives and levels of analysis determining causes and consequences: on international system level, foreign policy analysis level and from individual political leader's decision-making perspective. However, positivist approaches have been dominating most of the scholarly work on the Cuban missile crisis. Most of those works are rooted in empiricist observation of the event, accepting the idea "that there can be such a thing as politically neutral analysis of external reality" (Linklater 1996: 6). The dominance of empiricism has limited the space for epistemological debates about the construction of knowledge about the Cuban missile crisis itself. Most of the works on the topic focus on the general pattern of correspondence, facts and historical details. Thus, up-to-date scholarship based on primary sources lacks emphasis on the usage of language "beyond the sentence" as an essential indicator exposing power dynamics, anticipated outcomes and misunderstandings between engaged actors. Dominant methodological approaches in the

study of international relations mostly fail to focus on how social construction of knowledge and understanding of "reality" shaped and influenced JFK Kennedy's or Nikita Khrushchev's perceptions and actions during the Cuban missile crisis.

Several historians and political scientists have underlined the historical significance of those thirteen days as a pivotal moment in the Cold War history (Colman 2016, Munton & Welch 2012, White 1996). In 1992, after the declassification of confidential documents and correspondences initiated by Philip Brenner, the Professor of International Relations at the American University, hundreds of documents related to the Cuban missile crisis have been released, including letters between General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Nikita Khrushchev and the President of the United States John F. Kennedy. Some of those personal letters between John F. Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev (including those regarding to the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, Berlin Wall, affairs in Laos) were kept in secret, still labelled as classified until 2000. Letters also include personal correspondence, congratulations about various occasions and even anecdotes shared between the two leaders.

After declassification of confidential documents and correspondences between the U.S government, the Soviet Union and Cuban Officials, researchers and experts have drawn on those materials as essential primary sources for historical and analytical accounts. Approaching the Cuban Missile Crisis from Critical Theoretical perspectives is still relatively new trend in academia. Laffey and Weldes in "Decolonizing the Cuban Missile Crisis" address how knowledge practices are manifested in the production and reproduction of discursive framing (2008). Using a postcolonial approach, they claim that efforts to produce a critical oral history enabled to see events of October 1962 from the Cuban perspective, long excluded from interpretative debates involving only superpowers. More recently Karlsson and Acosta (2019) also tried to emphasize on the crisis from a Cuban perspective. By adding local and human dimensions they focus on historical, archaeological and anthropological reflections. New approaches open up space for theorizing from various new perspectives contributing to the large body of theoretical literature on the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Jervis (2016) offers analytical points about the political psychology of leaders and suggests that Kennedy's and Khrushchev's decisions are fundamentally speculative. The author pays particular attention to Khrushchev's supposed "irrationality" and inconsistencies in his behavior (2016). In contrast to Jervis's findings Radchenko (2016) questions validity of arguments that emphasize on Khrushchev's irrationality and idealism, claiming there is no real evidence for making such statements (:187). He argues that main sources of such observations are based on second-hand accounts of Khrushchev's lieutenants and oral histories of Soviet military and political figures, who had limited access to Khrushchev's decision-making (2016). Considering such different interpretations of first-hand sources by academics and practitioners, presented paper takes historiographical standpoint with caution and instead takes primary sources – fifteen letters exchanged during the crisis – as the main data for analyses.

In the following paper, the author utilises the Critical Discourse Analysis of diplomatic correspondence between Kennedy and Khrushchev to underline the importance of American discourse, values and ideologies manifested in the language – influencing the interpretation of the letters. The following paper, through a post-structural approach, seeks to analyse how American value-centric discourse on the Cuban missile crisis influenced diplomatic negotiations between Kennedy's and Khrushchev. The paper engages with Kennedy's perceptions of reality and the use of language as a socially constructed pattern. In order to do so, first, the author identifies the dominant narratives in American political discourse, then examines how these

they were manifested in diplomatic correspondence. The final part of the paper attempts to examine how did the American narratives prevalent during Cuban missile crisis influence interpretation and understanding of the events during the crisis.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The knowledge generated in the field of International Relations and international relations history has been dominated by positivist approaches, which involved a commitment to a unified view of science and adoption of methodologies rooted in natural science (Smith et al.1996: xi). Following paper takes Critical interpretative approach guided through post-structural analyses to decouple negotiations process during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

The popularity of alternative approaches and post-modern theorizing continue to influence contemporary international relations theory. One of the most influential thinkers of Frankfurt School, Jurgen Habermas, claims that there is no such thing as true empirical statements independent of knowledge-constitutive interests and prediction (qt in Smith 1996: 11-44). As Outhwaite notes, in Habermas's theory of communicative action central idea is an act of communication, entailing ethical and moral commitments—"ideal speech situation", "which presupposes that statements are comprehensible, true, right and sincere" (: 28). Following Outhwaite's observations of Habermas's work, Smith concludes that consensus would be achievable if one saw the situation in which power and distortion were removed from the communication, that actions must be seen from the perspective of an actor involved (: 28). Current epistemological positions involving the notion of communicative acts hence open an unexplored dimension of the Cuban missile crisis. Behind simple telegraph texts, one can focus on meanings beyond the sentences and broader discourses manifested in them.

In the following paper, the author uses theory as a critique through postmodern paradigms. The theory is used in a dialectical manner, to make sense of the construction of reality and knowledge, and how an understanding of this "reality" by engaged actors influenced the Cuban missile crisis. The author uses discourse analysis – the methodological approach "concerned with the production of meaning through talk and texts" (Torfing 2005: 6) – focusing on semantic aspects in a conversation between the two leaders: Kennedy and Khrushchev, their power dynamics, use of language and narrative performed in order to transmit the message to each other. The main objective of the paper is to examine how American discourse, values and ideologies manifested in language use in the diplomatic correspondence influenced negotiations between Kennedy and Khrushchev. In order to decouple discursive construction of the meanings of the negotiations, the following sub-questions were formulated: 1) what were the dominant narratives in the American political discourse 2) How those narratives were manifested in diplomatic correspondence between Khrushchev and Kennedy 3) How did the American discourses influence Kennedy's interpretation and understanding of the diplomatic correspondence.

In the backdrop of the emergence of alternative approaches to IR methodology, discourse analysis is becoming increasingly popular, especially between young scholars opting for more critical post-modern approaches against mainstream methodologies. However, the application of the poststructuralist methodology to the field of International Relations is still marginalized (Ghica 2013). In the paper, the author focuses on the correspondence between October 16 till October 28. In total, fifteen letters were exchanged during thirteen days timeframe^[1]. Inspired by Foucault, the author aims to identify power relations instituted in the correspondence at the discursive level (1979, 2002).

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is widely used when dealing with discourse in a Foucaultian sense. This multidisciplinary approach focuses not only on semantic aspects but on production and reproduction of knowledge and power via utterances. According to Norman Fairclough, it examines language as a "form of social practice" (1995: 20). Fairclough suggests a framework of analysis for conducting CDA with the aim of mapping "three separate forms of analysis onto one another: analysis of (spoken or written) language texts, analysis of discourse practice (processes of text production, distribution and consumption) and analysis of discursive events as instances of sociocultural practice" (: 2). The following paper is an attempt to incorporate this threefold analysis.

CDA is particularly useful when dealing with primary sources such as letters. In order to situate the context into broader discourses, primary sources were complemented with secondary analyses to map production and re-production of the knowledge about the Cuban Missile Crisis. Codes were defined during the analysis, but data analysis was conducted deductively as the themes under which codes were categorized were derived from theory and other research findings. Drawing from comprehensive literature review of the works on Cuban Missile Crisis (Nadel 2004, Laffey and Weldes 2008, Colman 2016, White 2016) and well as interpretative approaches in IR theory (Linklater 1996, Smith et al. 1996, Checkel 2007, Ghica 2013) the author identified three main narratives in American discourse towards the Soviet Union. The first theme prevalent in the diplomatic correspondence articulated in Kennedy's letters is American discourse of "Othering" Soviet Union; second: American position of superiority as the watchdog of global peace; and the third: discourse on the ideological rivalry of capitalism vis-à-vis communism. The presented paper includes, although is not limited to examining main themes in conversations and speeches, but also puts emphasis on actor's perspectives and language use.

Discussion and Data analyses

Discourse: Re-constructing U.S narratives

"The United States, empowered by the binding energy of the universe, was to become the universal container" (Nadel: 14)

Before proceeding to the analysis, the term "discourse" has to be briefly defined. As Mills claims "the term "discourse" has become common currency in a variety of disciplines [...], so much that it is frequently left undefined as if its usage were a pure common knowledge" (2004: 1). Leech and Short define discourse by stating:

„Discourse is linguistic communication seen as a transaction between speaker and hearer, as an interpersonal activity whose form is determined by its social purpose. Text is linguistic communication (either spoken or written) seen merely as a message coded in its auditory or visual medium“ (qt. in Mills 2004: 4).

The term discourse has been widely used expanding disciplinary boundaries of academic to non-academic studies. However, works of Michel Foucault are one of the most important in the field. In the following paper, the author uses the term discourse in Foucaultian sense defined as "systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of action, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak" (Lessa 2006: 286). Foucault emphasized how power can, on the one hand, constrain and on the other, produce the truth, thus claiming that there is a two-way relationship between the creation of power and construction of knowledge: the truth that is the product of the social practices (Foucault 1979).

Another prominent poststructuralist, Jean-Francois Lyotard, expressed scepticism towards "universal truth" manifested in metanarratives legitimizing dominance of specific ideas over the others. He emphasized "localized" narratives while rejecting the universality of grand narratives, arguing progressive politics should always be based on locally comprised language games. He argues that decision-makers attempt to minimize differences between a message sender and an addressee, accepting credulity of meta-narratives for both sides. This, in turn, results in miscommunication and misunderstanding (1984).

According to Laffey and Weldes, the dominant narrative of the Cuban Missile Crisis events emerged from the ExComm (The Executive Committee of the National Security Council) defining and limiting scholarly and popular analysis of the events of October 1962 (2008). As Scott and Smith note "the very definition of the crisis and what exactly its main events were has been dictated by the American version of what happened" (qt. in Laffey and Weldes, 2008: 664). Relations between International Relations as a discipline and historiographies – empirical work by historians is not "an unproblematic background narrative from which theoretically neutral data can be elicited for the framing of problems and testing of theories" (qt. in Laffey and Weldes 2008: 557). Rethinking epistemological and ontological frameworks of the events of October 1962 implies a reconstruction of the dominant U.S narrative.

Alan Nadel's book "Containment Culture: American Narratives, Postmodernism, and the Atomic Age" gives a deep insight into American's perception of the world order in a nuclear age. He argues that after the explosion of the atomic bomb over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, American narrative:

„Developed to control the fear and responsibility endemic to possessing atomic power. The central motif of that narrative was "containment", in which insecurity was absorbed by internal security, internationalism by global strategy, apocalypse and utopia by a Christian theological mandate, and xenophobia- the fear of the Other- by courtship, the activity in which Otherness is the necessary supplement to seduction, whether that seduction is formal or illicit, voluntary or coerced “(1995: 14)

As Donald Pease observed, the American foreign policy during the Cold War was "marked by a complex narrative of Other and Same" (qt. in Nadel 1995: 14). Nadel argues that since President Truman, "democracy" has been an important narrative in containment policy, providing foreign aid to nations "to survive as a free" (15). Nadel continues by referencing Kennan who in his essay "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" criticizes "Kremlin's conduct of foreign policy: the secretiveness, the lack of frankness, the duplicability, the wary, suspiciousness, and the basic unfriendliness of purpose" (: 15). According to Kennan American strength, decisiveness, power would serve the interests of containment "by making the Soviets look less potent and attractive, and thus by depriving them of partners" (: 15). Nadel quotes Kennan's words to demonstrate the construction of American national narrative: "the issues of Soviet-American relations is, in essence, a test of the overall worth of the United States as a nation among nations" (: 17). This narrative corresponds to the narrative of supremacy, global watchdog of peace, community per excellence, nation "accepting responsibilities of moral and political leadership that history intended them to bear" (Kennan qt. in Nadel 2004: 17). Nadel also emphasizes the narrative of capitalism vs socialism and American's thrive on capitalist competition. Three main narratives are discussed below identified from the letters and the literature review.

Narrative I: "Othering"

The increasing popularity of discursive theory in academic research has highlighted the importance of ideological construction of social reality, which is rooted in cultural assumptions of particular national subjective position (Sharp 1992: 59). According to Sharp, those who exist outside of a nation-state boundary and have different ideology become characterized as Other (: 57). The concept of Otherness is inherently linked to the "ideological perception of the national self (: 57). Powell and Menéndez define othering "as a set of dynamics, processes, and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities (: 17). Construction of "the self" by dialectic opposition with the "other" can be found in Hegel's Phenomenology of mind (1807). Hegelian concepts of "the other" and "othering" have become popular in critical discourses that construct the self in opposition to the other. Creation of a discursive field of Otherness in the American narratives aimed to explain the role of the USA and the USSR in the world system, providing exclusive delineation between those who adhered "universal" values (western-centric world views) "and all those outside practising different, inferior values" (Sharp 1992: 59-60). The geopolitically and ideologically distanced USSR was labelled as "Other".

One of the most canonical works on Othering is Edward Said's "Orientalism" first published in 1978, where he exposes how Eurocentric tradition of dualisms created the notion of Oriental – the discourse of exclusiveness and domination vis-a-vis less civilized East. He claimed that the relationship between Occident and Orient was a relationship of power and hegemony (2003: 8). Even though the relations between the US and the Soviet Union exposed different power dynamics, position of superiority was still in a play.

The Soviet Union was not only the "Other" but also an enemy. However, enmity is not what the Otherness necessarily imply. According to Vuorinen "inventing an enemy begins, paradoxically, with the invention of the self" (2012: 1). Vuorinen continues, by stating that "the image of the enemy is inherently an image of the threat". The main difference between the Other and the enemy lies in perceived or actual threat (: 3).

If the US was the "community per excellence", the Soviet Union was the Other and the enemy because it did not share capitalist western ideology and values. Moreover, it was a powerful state with nuclear weapons that could challenge the U.S dominance in the world politics. One can observe interesting dynamics can be observed in the perception of the communist ideology as inherently "wrong": was it "wrong" because it was the ideology of the Soviet Union, a powerful rival of the US, or was it "wrong" because of inherent unacceptance of the communist philosophy? Answering this question goes beyond the scope of this paper, but one can argue that the US used these differences to justify and legitimize their hostility towards the Soviet Union.

Codes corresponding to depiction of the Soviet Union as Other was coded under the title "Othering Soviet Union". After familiarizing with the data, the first pattern to be noticed is the frequent use of personal and possessive pronouns vis a vis another side for example: "reaction of my government [...] to your ambassador", "concerned me [...] that your Government", "to avoid any incorrect assessment on the part of your government [...] I publicly stated" (Letter from Kennedy to Khrushchev, October

22), there are number of similar examples found throughout all letters of Kennedy addressed to Khrushchev. This delineation between Us and You can be seen as one the indicator of Othering.

Another pattern, that is also a characteristic of the 'othering' is the process of attributing unwanted features to the Other. Kennedy indirectly blames Khrushchev's on insanity and irrationality in the following statement:

" In our discussions and exchanges on Berlin and other international questions, the one thing that has most concerned me has been the possibility that your Government would not correctly understand the will and determination of the United States in any given situation, since I have not assumed that you or any other sane man would, in this nuclear age, deliberately plunge the world into war which it is crystal clear no country could win and which could only result in catastrophic consequences to the whole world, including the aggressor" (Letter from Kennedy to Khrushchev, October 22).

Kennedy, young, ambitious politician, the president of the one of the most powerful nations in the world, from the position of superiority, assumes that his interpretation of the "international questions" is the right way to look at those events, while he sees Khrushchev's perspective as inherently "wrong". Widespread anti-communist discourse in American society, his strong stance against Castro during presidential campaign and failure in Bay of Pigs invasion influenced Kennedy's high sensitivity towards the Cuban missile crisis.

Why was the installation of nuclear missiles seen as an inherently hostile act towards the US? Why Khrushchev's assurance that the main objective was to defend Cuba against American imperialism was met with scepticism? Why do American Historians emphasize the irrationality of Khrushchev while he expressed no less sanity than Kennedy during the Cuban Missile Crisis? Answers can be found in the American Centric construction of reality, assuming that there is one objective truth: the American meta-narrative about the world order and its place within it. Mark J. White, one of the prominent American historian on Cuban missile crisis notes:

"Making sense of Khrushchev's gamble has been difficult partly because his foreign policy, in general, has defied understanding. Impulsive, moody, and unpredictable, Khrushchev [...] approached international affairs in a way that seemed to mirror his personality" (White 1997: 30).

Projecting unwanted features such as unpredictable, moody and impulsive behaviour to the "other" can be seen as a common strategy in the enemy construction, and historians are indeed mirrors of meta-narratives and discourses that influence the interpretation of reality. Joanna Sharp argues that any representation of the Other automatically accepted by a national populace would be deterministic and that the construction of a hegemonic discursive field of Otherness involves the creation of many discourses where "other" is fundamentally different from the national self (60). Therefore, Othering is a complex process that involves historical heritage, culture, ideology and political discourse.

To conclude the chapter, Othering was a standard narrative underpinning the diplomatic correspondence during the Cuban Missile Crisis. The discourse of the Soviet Otherness was reinforced by the discourse of irrationality and "the notion that they can never be like Americans because they even think differently" (Sharp 1992: 64). Soviets could never be equal to Americans

because they could not adopt the American way of life (: 65), this discourse of power and knowledge from the position of superiority has a lot in common with Orientalism.

Narrative II: Global Watchdog of The Peace

The second narrative observed in the correspondence was the perceived ideological and cultural global superiority and supremacy of the US. Since the introduction of the nuclear weapons for the first time to win a war against the Axis powers (Daadler & Lodal 2008: 80), the United States has "worked diligently to preserve its nuclear supremacy" (Maddock qt. in Rotter 2011: 1175). Chung captures the essence of exclusionism of nuclear non-proliferation in the following quote: "nuclear apartheid is justified in the liberal mindset since western democracies have the moral imperative and ethical superiority to impose their will for the good of the "other"(qt. in Nadel 1995: 7). Nadel claims that bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki was motivated by the desire to intimidate Moscow rather than to defeat Japan (: 13). Possession of the atomic weaponry established a new form of power relationships. Nuclear power became an integral part of the American narrative that it was a nation justified to be the watchdog of global security. This position also implied the depiction of the US as God's chosen nation by possessing nuclear weapons. As Boyer notes, those "blessings" "were undoubtedly intended to enfold atomic weapons within America's religious and moral traditions, and, in truth, for some it posed no ethical difficulties: God had given America the secret, and its further development would reflect the divine plan (qt. in Nadel 1995: 14).

With the doctrine of Containment (introduced by George F. Kennan in his famous anonymous article "The Sources of Soviet Conduct", published in 1947) the United States, empowered by the binding energy of the universe, was to become the universal container" (Nadel 1995: 14). According to Kennan containment of the USSR was justified under the liberal democratic discourse and resisting projection of the Soviet Union abroad was to be achieved by spreading democracy (X, 1947).

Under this discursive field of "containment" the United States acquired the title of the ultimate guarantor of the global peace, thus, qualifying itself to talk on behalf of the other nations. Kennedy's letter to Khrushchev on October 22, 1962, explicitly expresses this narrative:

„I must tell you that the United States is determined that this threat to the security of this hemisphere be removed. At the same time, I wish to point out that the action we are taking is the minimum necessary to remove the threat to the security of the nations of this hemisphere. The fact of this minimum response should not be taken as a basis, however, for any misjudgement on your part“ (J. F. Kennedy's letter to N. Khrushchev on October 22, 1962)[2].

"The continuation of this threat, or a prolonging of this discussion concerning Cuba by linking these problems to the broader questions of European and world security, would surely lead to an intensification of the Cuban crisis and a grave risk to the peace of the world" (J. F. Kennedy's letter to N. Khrushchev, Washington, October 22, 1962)[3].

This extract from Kennedy's letter is a manifestation of the American narrative declaring itself as the protector of its allies, and ultimately of all the nations adhering to capitalist ideology and the whole world.

In order to see a clear distinction in the views of Kennedy and Khrushchev, it is necessary to interpret Khrushchev's vision of the Soviet role in the world peace. As the main political slogan of the socialist states, "Workers of the world, unite!" called for a union of all the countries, Soviet Union's foreign policy also expressed "global" claims. In response to Kennedy's letter sent on November 22, Khrushchev replies in the same spirit:

„I must say frankly that measures indicated in your statement constitute a serious threat to peace and to the security of nations. The United States has openly taken the path of grossly violating the United Nations Charter, path of violating international norms of freedom of navigation on the high seas, the path of aggressive actions both against Cuba and against the Soviet Union. The statement by the Government of the United States of America can only be regarded as undisguised interference in the internal of the Republic of Cuba, the Soviet Union, and other states “.

None of the leaders interpret the Cuban missile crisis as a confrontation between solely two superpowers but seeks to legitimise their actions by talking on behalf of the "other states" or nations. However, if one thoroughly examines the very articulation of the words, they can observe that Khrushchev does not "globalize" the threat on the whole hemisphere but mostly refers to the Soviet Union and Cuba or the "other states", by which he most likely means the socialist block.

Narrative III: Capitalism vs Socialism? Ideologies and The Discourse

Critical theorists who analyse determinants of thinking and behaviour face difficulties in deciding to draw on the work based on the notion of ideology or refer to the discourse (Mills 2004: 29).

Although in the following paper the author complies with Foucaultian notion of ideology, as in Kennedy's and Khrushchev's letters it refers to the distinction between capitalist and socialist market, and more broadly the way of life, the analysis of the correspondence will be conducted using the actors' definition of ideology. In order to avoid an ontological error in defining the ideology, the author will briefly examine it in Foucaultian sense and then move to the "traditional" understanding of "communism vs capitalism" ideological positions.

The main focus of the notions "discourse" and "ideology" is on power relations. Instead of focusing on an oppressive nature of the state, Foucault extended relations of power "beyond the limits of the state (Foucault, 1979: 38). He argued that power is dispersed in society, possessing both productive and repressive characteristics. Therefore, in Foucaultian sense, one can assume that a political leader's system of thought is as much affected by ideology as the one of an ordinary citizen. Therefore, Kennedy and Khrushchev were both influenced by the narratives accepted and widespread in their societies.

The correspondence between Kennedy and Khrushchev is abundant with direct references to their ideological standpoints. Even though the basis of the Cold War has never been primarily ideological, however, it has been a vital source for legitimizing the confrontation by both superpowers: the United States and the Soviet Union. The letter from General Secretary Khrushchev to President Kennedy sent on October 26, 1962, articulates the essence of the communist vs capitalist debate. In the abovementioned letter Khrushchev depicts the crisis through communist lenses:

“Everyone needs peace: both capitalists, if they have reason and still more, Communists, people who know how to value not only their own lives but, more than anything, the lives of peoples. We, communists, are against all wars between states in general and have been defending the cause of peace since we came into the world” (N. Khrushchev letter to J. F. Kennedy, Moscow, October 26, 1962)[4].

Kennedy also refers to the ideological differences that, according to him, constitute the basis of "over-all balance of power":

“I made clear that in view of the objectives of the ideology to which you adhere, the United States could not tolerate any action on your part which in a major way disturbed the existing over-all balance of power in the world” (J. F. Kennedy's letter to N. Khrushchev, Washington, October 22, 1962)[5].

Both leaders depict ideological differences as the main justification of their objectives as they both interpret Cuban missile crisis from their ideological standpoints. For Kennedy, this would disturb "over-all balance of power", for Khrushchev, support for Cuba is justified by its adherence to the communist ideology and friendly relations with the USSR.

The relationship between ideology (not in Foucaultian sense) has never been simple during the Cold war. Both sides' rhetorical commitment to the ideology was used to legitimize their objectives seeking world domination. This rivalry depicts the power relations between the US with the capitalist dominant ideology and the Soviet Union, with marginalized- communist ideology still looked down. Therefore, the US's stance towards the Cuban missile crisis can be observed in the backdrop of its dominant position in the world politics, aiming to maintain power, and for the Soviet Union, the attempt to prove the credence of its ideology and thus to justify its position to be equal to the US. Khrushchev sees the balance between the two ideologies as a guarantee of peace, while the American discursive field on communism is inevitably negative. The following extract captures Khrushchev's vision on stable peace:

“We quarrel with you, we have differences on ideological questions. But our view of the world consists in this, that ideological questions, as well as economic problems, should be solved not by military means, they must be solved on the basis of peaceful competition, i.e., as this is understood in capitalist society, on the basis of competition. We have proceeded and are proceeding from the fact that the peaceful co-existence of the two different social-political systems, now existing in the world, is necessary, that it is necessary to assure a stable peace. That is the sort of principle we hold” [6].

Misinterpretation

Different discourses lead to different interpretations. The American discourse on the place of the United States in world politics largely determined what could have been considered a threat to its security. Containment policy shaped and influenced the US's stance towards the Soviet expansion, thus, any attempt of the Soviet Union to strengthen its position on the international arena vis-à-vis its dealing with other states, any fluctuation of the "overall balance" (as Kennedy notes) was interpreted as a threat to the US's position and its national security.

Misunderstandings were caused by several reasons. First, reason probably was differences in backgrounds including social, cultural and ideological. Both leaders interpreted the crisis through their own "truths", delegitimizing the opinion of the other.

Kennedy, a Democrat leaning more towards conservative than liberal ideas, saw the US's place in the world from a position of superiority and saw the USSR as a threat to the American-centric narrative on global "freedom", "democracy" and nuclear monopoly. At the Mormon Tabernacle in 1960, Kennedy said: "The enemy is the communist system itself — implacable, insatiable, unceasing in its drive for world domination"[7]. This discourse on the USSR significantly shaped Kennedy's actions during the Cuban missile crisis.

In the letter sent on October 26, 1962, Khrushchev for a number of times refers to the different interpretations that the US has given to the Soviet Union's actions or words:

"I assure you that your conclusions regarding offensive weapons on Cuba are groundless. It is apparent from what you have written me that our conceptions are different on this score, or rather, we have different estimates of these or those military means. Indeed, in reality the same forms of weapons can have different interpretations" (N. Khrushchev's letter to J. F. Kennedy, Moscow, October 26, 1962)[8].

"How can one, consequently, give such a completely incorrect interpretation as you are now giving, to the effect that some sort of means on Cuba are offensive. All the means located there, and I assure you of this, have a defensive character, are on Cuba solely for the purposes of defence and we have sent them to Cuba at the request of the Cuban Government. You, however, say that these are offensive" N. Khrushchev's letter to J. F. Kennedy, Moscow, October 26, 1962)[9].

The "truth" that actors tell is constrained by discursive frameworks imposed upon them. These frameworks circulating at the time, and all knowledge, as Foucault would argue, is determined by institutional, political and social pressures. The failure in Bay of Pigs invasion, upcoming elections, opinions coming from the Executive Committee of the National Security Council both shaped and influenced his interpretation and understanding of the Cuban missile crisis.

As Mills notes, different views on a discourse have one aspect in common—they consider discourses to be organized around the practices of exclusion (2004:12). The American discourse portrayed communism in self-evident negative terms; accepting capitalism as a superior ideology happened in the backdrop of excluding the communist discursive positions.

Conclusion

The presented paper on a discursive level examined the correspondence between John F. Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev as an articulation of dominant American narratives. The paper dealt with the analysis of how values, culture, ideology comprising the American narratives manifested in the language use influenced the interpretation and understanding of the Cuban missile crisis. Following Foucault's work on discourse, it aimed to show the importance of political framing, claiming that discourses shape the interpretation of the texts. Different discourses employed by the US and the USSR voicing cultural narratives and ideologies were examined under broader framing, as those they shape the understanding of reality and identity.

The paper drew on the importance of language, selective or unconscious use of vocabulary as a manifestation of the discourse. Three main American narratives were identified and examined: the first one was the narrative of "othering". The second –

American narrative on its dominant position as the watchdog of global peace, and the third one concerned the ideological narrative on democracy and Western values, broadly framed on the premises of opposing capitalism and communism.

The first narrative identified in the correspondence was a portrayal of the USSR as the Other, depicting "the self" by dialectic opposition with the "other", delineating the cultural difference between democratic, capitalist US and the totalitarian, communist USSR. "Othering the Soviet Union" was manifested in John F. Kennedy's letters to Nikita Khrushchev emphasizing "us" versus "you" semiotics.

The second narrative dealt with the discursive field of "containment" under which the United States acquired the title of an ultimate guarantor of global peace. This paper argues that the perception of the US as a "community per excellence" influenced American political elites' understanding of the Soviet actions on Cuba.

The third narrative examines the discursive field of the ideological rivalry of between capitalism and socialism under the broader framing, which includes but is not limited to the political and economic theory of social organization. The paper focuses on the Foucaultian tradition of understanding an ideology emphasizing power relations within which dominant narratives are produced and reproduced.

In conclusion, one can argue that discourse influences the way people understand, interpret and communicate with each other, as "the perception of the world depends on ideologies, the concept of powers constraints our language use and, therefore, our communication with others" (Scheu and Jose: 8). Critical discourse analysis of the correspondence between N. Khrushchev and J. F. Kennedy reveals how can ideologies and cultural narratives be manifested in the language use, shaping and influencing communication. Therefore, the systems of thoughts manifested in the discourse played an important role in the diplomatic correspondence during the Cuban missile crisis. The main focus of this paper was the American narratives and Kennedy's position. However, the USSR's narratives were also briefly examined to give deeper insight into the perceptions of both sides.

This paper implemented postmodern critique to examine how the dominant American narratives were articulated and manifested in the language of the diplomatic correspondence and how did the American discourse on the Cuban missile crisis and ideological meta-narratives shape diplomatic negotiations between Kennedy and Khrushchev. Instead of emphasizing historical facts and empirical accounts gained through the positivist epistemology, a reflectivist approach provided deeper analysis. Arguing that any form of diplomatic negotiation or outcome can be subjectively understood and interpreted through different lenses can open up new opportunities for further discussions about construction of the knowledge about the Cuban missile crisis.

Notes

[1] All letters available at John F. Kennedy Presidential library archives at <http://microsites.jfklibrary.org/cm/>

[2] J. F. Kennedy's letter to N. Khrushchev, Washington, October 22, 1962, in JFK Presidential Library Archives, at: <http://microsites.jfklibrary.org/cm/oct22/doc4.html>

[3] J. F. Kennedy's letter to N. Khrushchev, Washington, October 22, 1962, in JFK Presidential Library Archives, at: <http://microsites.jfklibrary.org/cmcc/oct22/doc4.html>

[4] N. Khrushchev's letter to J. F. Kennedy, Moscow, October 26, 1962 , in JFK Presidential Library Archives at: <http://microsites.jfklibrary.org/cmcc/oct26/>

[5] J. F. Kennedy's letter to N. Khrushchev, Washington, October 22, 1962, in JFK Presidential Library Archives, at: <http://microsites.jfklibrary.org/cmcc/oct22/doc4.html>

[6] N. Khrushchev's letter to J. F. Kennedy, Moscow, October 26, 1962 , in JFK Presidential Library Archives at: <http://microsites.jfklibrary.org/cmcc/oct26/>

[7] Ira Stoll. TIME. October 14, 2013 <http://ideas.time.com/2013/10/14/jfk-was-a-political-conservative/> [accessed 01.06.2018]

[8] N. Khrushchev's letter to J. F. Kennedy, Moscow, October 26, 1962 , in JFK Presidential Library Archives at: <http://microsites.jfklibrary.org/cmcc/oct26/>

[9] N. Khrushchev's letter to J. F. Kennedy, Moscow, October 26, 1962 , in JFK Presidential Library Archives at: <http://microsites.jfklibrary.org/cmcc/oct26/>

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