

Representations of the Afghanistan War in Russian school history textbooks

Elizaveta Polukhina

National Research University Higher School of Economics

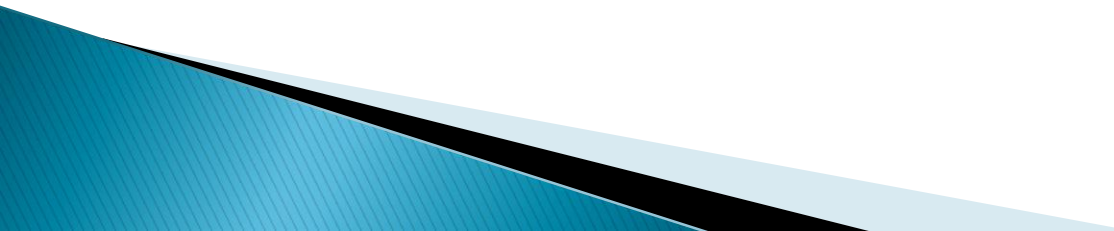
epolukhina@hse.ru

Alexander Malyugin

Institute of Sociology, State Academic University of Human Sciences

iskander-malyugin@yandex.ru

Contents

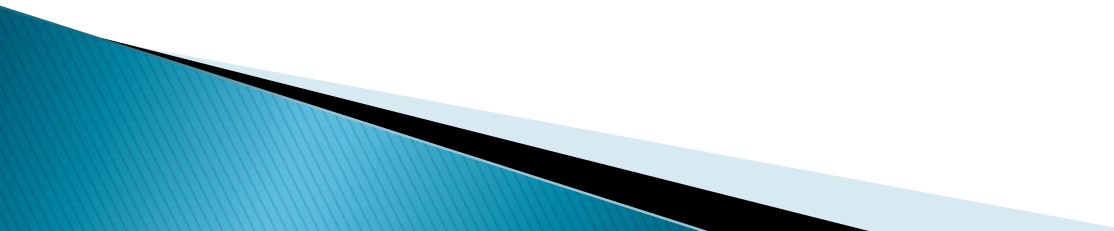
- I. General context of issue
 - II. Main points of empirical discourse
analytical research
 - III. Conclusions
- 

Context:

textbooks «Modern history of Russia»

- ▶ **The content is forming and recreating**
 - 2004: textbook from Dolutskiy I. **deprived** its label «Recommended by the Ministry of Education»
 - 2007: **special publication for history teachers** (recommendation how to teach)
 - 2012 – 2013: **expertise the content of history textbooks** (facts falsification)

Meaning the school textbooks

- ▶ **Document of public cultural memory**
(M. Halbwachs)
 - ▶ Source about what is "necessary" to know about the past
 - ▶ The result of existing ideological regime
- 

Afghanistan War and school textbooks

- ▶ **Politically inconvenient event**
- ▶ **Avoided the issue of the Afghanistan War /limited information**
- ▶ **Advantageous case for discourse research**

*Good grief!
We got caught up in
history...*
(L. Brezhnev on the
Afghanistan War)¹

There was only one picture



Советский спецназ в Афганистане. 1988 г.

- ▶ Izmozik V.S. , Rudnik S.N. History of Russia: 11th grade. Textbook for students of general education institutions / Edited by R.S. Ganelin. M.: Ventana–Graf, 2009. P. 279.

Key research question?

- ▶ What is **official discourse** about Afghanistan War **now** and what was it in the **past**?



Sample of school textbooks

▶ 16 school textbooks (1990 to 2010)

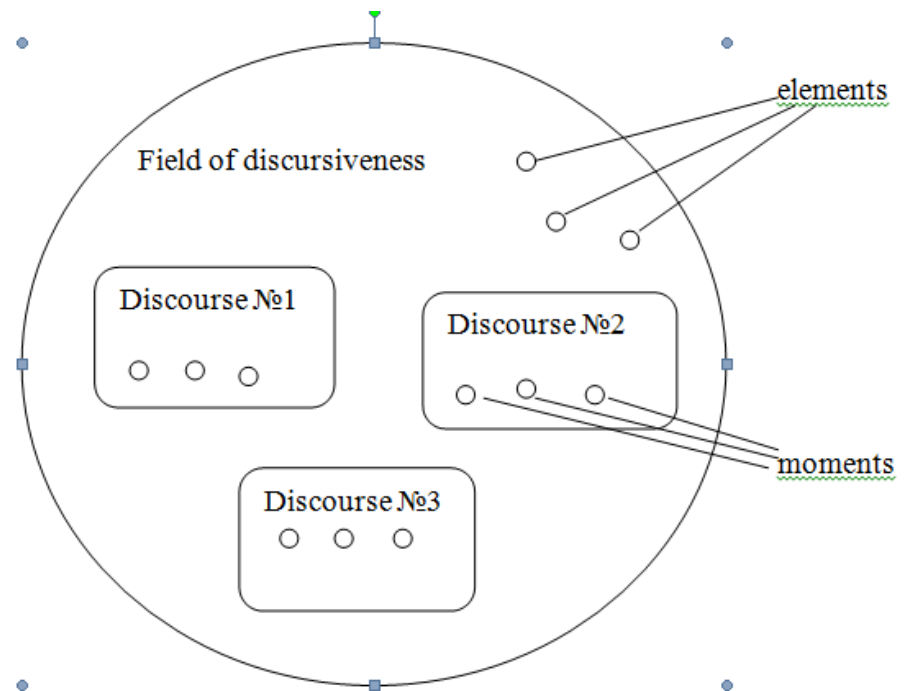
- 1) M. Gorbachev – 1985–1991;
- 2) B. Yeltsin – 1991–2000;
- 3) V. Putin – 2000–2008;
- 4) D. Medvedev – 2008–2010.

Structure of sample: school history textbooks (1990–2010)

Number of textbooks in the selection	Year of release	Political period
1	1990	M. S. Gorbachev
2	1992	B. N. Yeltsin
3	1994	
4	1995	
5	1995	
6	1995	
7	1996	
8	1997	
9	1997	
10	1997	
11	2003	V. V. Putin
12	2007	
13	2007	
14	2009	D. A. Medvedev
15	2010	
16	2010	
Total: 16 textbooks in the sample		

Analytical frame

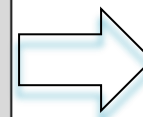
- ▶ **Discourse by Laclau and Mouffe**
 - system of fixed meanings
 - limited by the framework of a certain field



The changes in Afghanistan War representations

Discourse branch points

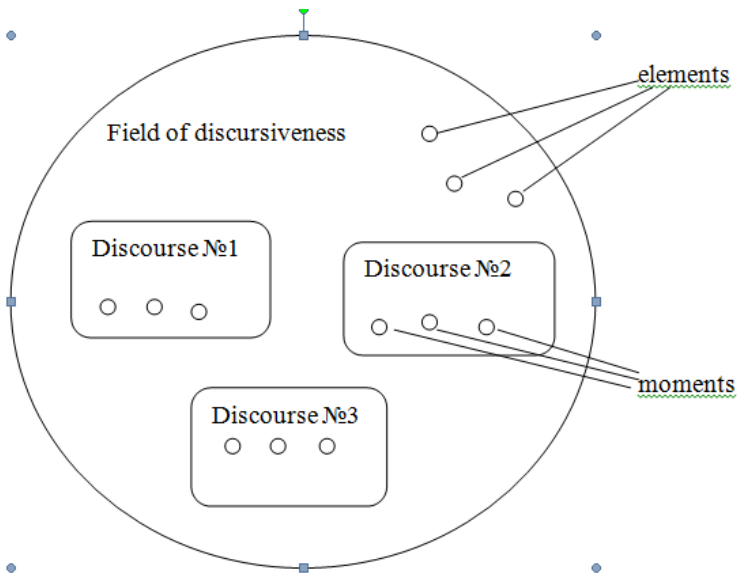
Perestroika Era	Yeltsin Presidency	Putin Presidency	Medvedev Presidency
"deployment of armed forces", "ill-conceived decision", "undeclared war", "secrecy"	"deployment of armed forces", "advancement on territory", "ill-conceived decision", "secrecy", "undeclared war", "mass resistance", "our own Vietnam", "military adventure", "occupied", "was overthrown", "was killed", "puppet government", "presence of Soviet armed forces", "war of aggression", "futile war", "holding our positions", "bloody war", "armed intervention", "invasion", "large-scale war", "limited contingent of Soviet armed forces", "brotherly help", "our international duty", "anti-Soviet feelings in the world", "extremely painfully perceived internationally", "military adventure", "occupied", "Revolution", "duty", "honor", "loyalty", "patriotism", "internationalism".	"advancement on territory", "brotherly help", "sending of armed forces", "bloody war", "deployment of Soviet military units", "additional load", "foreign policy mistake"	"military intervention", "small group of Soviet leaders", "was killed", "armed forces entered", "prolonged large-scale military operations", "use of force", "domestic policy problem"



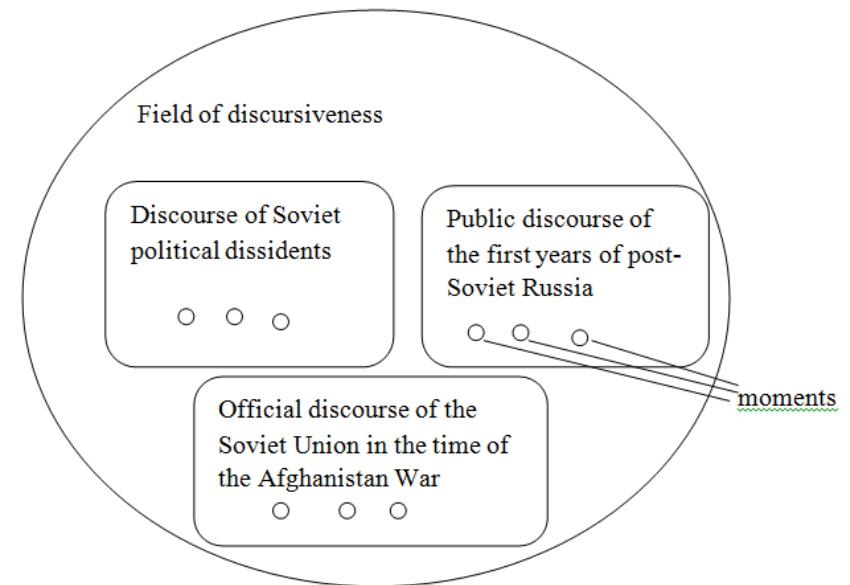
Discourse
branch points
depending on
the historical era

Discourse of Yeltsin Presidency

- ▶ Analytical frame of discourse by Laclau and Mouffe



- ▶ Representations of Afghanistan War in Yeltsin presidency



Transformation of external conditions for the discourse existence

Gorbachev's time	Yeltsin's time	Putin's time	Medvedev's time
Discourse of Soviet political dissidents	The expansion of the field of discursiveness appeared 1) discourse of Soviet political dissidents + 2) public discourse of the first years of post-Soviet Russia + 3) official discourse of the Soviet Union in the time of the Afghanistan War	The field of discursiveness was reduced	No changes

- ▶ So the reproduction of essential characteristics of school textbooks discourse continued (!)

Thank you for attention!

