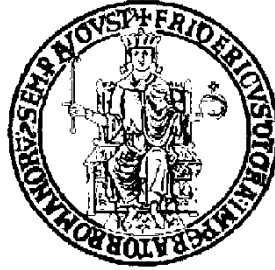# UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI NAPOLI FEDERICO II

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THINK TANKS AND POLICY ADVICE IN THE UNITED STATES: GENRES, DISCOURSES, STRATEGIES

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter one

1.1   Introduction: birth and development of an American idea

"Of the many influences on U.S. foreign policy formulation, the role of think tanks is among the most important and least appreciated."

  Richard Haas, former Director of Policy and Planning, U.S. Department of State, 2002.[1]

"There are moments in the evolution of U.S. foreign policy where think tanks have had a decisive impact in reshaping conventional wisdom and setting a new course on a key strategic issue."

  Ronald D. Asmus, Executive Director of Transatlantic Center, 2003.

It is not an empty space that divides politics, media, business, but a space in which ideas, projects, analyses are the essence of any think tank. A short and exhaustive definition, due to the polymorphic nature of these institutions, is not simple. Literally, think tanks are organizations of the most varied nature that operate as research centres and are intended to

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[1] Richard Haass worked as Director of Policy and Planning for the U.S. Department of State from 2001 to 2003.

influence the public decision-maker or promote a specific political and cultural agenda (see Diletti 2009). According to Rich (2004), think tanks are

> *indipendent, non-interest-based, non profit organizations that produce and principally rely on expertise and ideas to obtain support and to influence policymaking process.* Operationally, think tanks are non profit organizations that conduct and disseminate research and ideas on public policy issues. Politically, think tanks are aggressive institutions that actively seek to maximize public credibility and political access to make their expertise and ideas influential in policy making
> (Rich 2004: 11).

The term 'think tank' is an American invention, used in military jargon during the Second World War, with reference to the places where the special forces responsible for analyzing the progress of the war used to meet as required by the Department of Defense. The choice of the term 'tank', symbolizing a war-like attitude, is not casual, because other labels used at that time, with no explicit references to the war, proved to be ineffective.

In 1971, the first analysis of the think tanks by the journalist Paul Dickson was published, but only in the '80s and '90s the theme started to arouse some interest, particularly in light of the spread of ideological think tanks, especially Republican. It was the presidential victory of Ronald Reagan in 1980 that enabled the creation of an intellectual conservative élite who had access to government positions, but also major newspapers, television programs and magazines.

Basically, the difference between the first think tanks in Washington and those in vogue from the '70s onwards is to be found in their respective missions: if the former were distinguished by quality and social research, careful and scrupulous enough to be referred to as "universities without students" (see Abelson 2009), the latter were interested mostly to the media, political impact, and results.

Robert Kent Weaver (2000), from the Brookings Institution (a Democrat think tank) has proposed a simple scheme that matches each period with the corresponding model of think tank:

1° PATTERN	2° PATTERN	3° PATTERN
Beginning of XX century	From 1945 to the 60s	From 70s onwards
Research centres, also said 'Universities without students'.	Think tanks focusing on research and development; more structured and specialized than before.	*Partisan think tanks*, especially after the election of Ronald Reagan in the 80s.

Table n. 1 The evolution of US think tanks (from Diletti 2009).

The explanation of the spread of specialized research centres to support and assist the government action in the so-called progressive age is historically plausible, if we consider that it is in this period that the construction of American federalism actually took place: the transition from a rural republic, which was Jefferson's, to the industrial age of Roosevelt. The changes and the deep crisis, the economic and industrial disadvantages accompanied by mismanagement, inefficiency and

widespread social turmoil, needed the interpretative work of social scientists and pioneers of renewal, social and cultural innovation. The task was to promote social, institutional, economic reforms offering solutions to the government and citizens, resulting from the activity of extremely competent, specialized and therefore incontestable 'thinking heads'.

Philanthropists and political reformers, but also businessmen supported the new experts in the marketing of ideas, all united by the purpose to correct the imperfections of capitalism, while identifying it as the very essence of the 'new American Empire': the project was to preserve the managerial logic of large private enterprise that involved also the public apparatus, limiting some distorting effects such as monopolies and widespread political corruption.

Among the most important think tank Americans in the early decades of the twentieth century, Diletti (2009) includes:

• 1907: Russell Sage Foundation, founded by Margaret Olivia Slocum Sage, the widow of Russell Sage, with an initial funding of $ 10 million aiming to improve the conditions of life and work in the United States 'America.

• 1910: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a private non-profit organization, whose mission is the promotion of international peace and cooperation.

• 1916: Brookings Institution, still considered one of the most important Washington think tanks, created with the main objective to rationalize public spending and limit the control of the parties.

• 1919: Hoover Institution, founded by Herbert Hoover, then President of the United States (1929-1933), who proposed the mission of integrating government activity and private enterprise, while promoting peace, liberty and the guarantees of the American system.[2]

• 1920: National Bureau of Economic Research, created with a mission similar to that of the Brookings Institution, although it is currently an international network of economists.

• 1921: Council on Foreign Relations, mainly composed of businessmen and political leaders, and created with the aim of studying global problems and defining the foreign policy of the United States.

It is under the presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt that the most fervent and dynamic period opens and grows: his institutional reforms established the legitimacy and function of experts for the formulation of public policies as a guarantee. In addition, the Great Depression in 1929 that hit the U.S. and shook global economy made it necessary the use of specialists in government to recover from an economy crash. There started what was described by Arthur Schlesinger (1973) a period of "imperial presidency", thanks to President's ability to address directly to the public

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[2] To understand to what extent government policies are intertwined with the idea of economic freedom, it can be useful to read the way in which Hoover himself stated the mission of the institute in 1959: "This Institution supports the Constitution of the United States, its Bill of Rights and its method of representative government. *Both our social and economic systems are based on private enterprise from which springs initiative and ingenuity.... Ours is a system where the Federal Government should undertake no governmental, social or economic action, except where local government, or the people, cannot undertake it for themselves....* The overall mission of this Institution is, from its records, to recall the voice of experience against the making of war, and by the study of these records and their publication, to recall man's endeavors to make and preserve peace, and to sustain for America the safeguards of the American way of life. This Institution is not, and must not be, a mere library. But with these purposes as its goal, the Institution itself must constantly and dynamically point the road to peace, to personal freedom, and to the safeguards of the American system" (my emphasis; see http://www.hoover.org/about/mission-statement).

bypassing the Congress, which should mitigate and control the conduct of the government. The centralization of powers and functions within the White House was stronger than ever.

1.2 Participation, organization, communication strategies: how do think tanks work?

Think tanks in the US have a particular interest in controlling the relationship with Congress and his staff, administration officials, federal judges and representatives of state bodies and local authorities. Mc Gann 2005 describes two sets of objectives as typical features of U.S. think tanks: long-term objectives and short term strategies. Long - term objectives include a mediating function between the government and the public; the identification and evaluation of current policy issues; the interpretation of issues, events and policies for the electronic and print media, thus facilitating public understanding of domestic and international policy issues (Mc Gann 2005: 3).

Short-term strategies, instead, are mainly focused on 'setting the agenda', that is to say to transform ideas and emerging problems into policy issues through the construction of issue networks. The provision of a supply of personnel for the legislative and executive branches of government, as well as the ability to provide direct advice to the administration and the Congress (Mc Gann 2005: 4) are the main think tanks' actions that influence public debate. The experts from think tanks

regularly attend the meetings of the Congress and sometimes organize briefings for individual members of the Congress; on the other hand, government officials and members of Congress are invited to take part in the events of the think tank in such a way that they can express political views or actions of any kind in front of an audience of specialists.

An on-line registration and a badge pinned on the jacket with the name on are the requirements to participate in a think tank's business day. The daily agenda consists of debates, conferences and seminars (often set in times compatible with those of business: breakfast, lunch, after 6 pm) held by think tanks' experts, scholars, professors, politicians, members of the cabinet, foreign ministers, diplomats (see Diletti 2009; McGann 2005). The ultimate goal, regardless of the type of think tank, is to persuade and attract the attention of the public, the press, the media, the experts: information and its modes of spread are the vital element of a think tank.

As illustrated by James McGann (2005), from the University of Pennsylvania and founding member of the Foreign Policy Research Institute, the goal of spreading information is pursued by the think tank through a range of different mechanisms:

- seminars, conferences and briefings, in group or individually, may take place in public or open to a small number of participants; they are the tools that ensure a profitable interaction between individuals directly, or indirectly linked to research centres;

- publications: even the publishing industry, one of the oldest means of communication, are functional to the achievement of the mission of a think tank. Magazines, newspapers, monographs, brochures, faxes, emails and

newsletters, and more: websites are full of ideas, comments, suggestions, biographies of experts, research programs, events and everything that a think tank believes as strategic discussion points, aiming to reach the general public, or sometimes just part of it;

- policy papers and policy briefs: the former texts consist of about twenty pages, with descriptions rather long and meticulous, for the community of specialists in the field of a think tank; otherwise, the latter takes the form of documents that illustrate alternative policies and, as a rule, do not exceed three-four pages and have specific reading targets;

- the media: even television, radio news and talk shows do not seem to be able to do without the experts. From CNN to Fox News, NBC and through Mnsbc (see Diletti 2009: 64) the participation of think tanks' commentators in television programmes has now reached exponential levels. Not to mention that even places like the Brookings Institution and the Heritage Foundation have both their TV studios, and some experts from the American Enterprise Institute have their own weekly show broadcast on U.S. public television station PBS.[3]

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[3] One of the most famous is Ben Wattenberg, moderator of the weekly PBS television program *Think tank with Ben Wattenberg*.

1.3   A taxonomy of U.S. think tanks

It is possible to classify think tanks by means of the organizational structure and culture, the type of political or philosophical orientation and affiliation with the political apparatus-government (Abelson 1996; Diletti 2009). Depending on the nature of their political attitudes, think tanks can be: Conservatives, Liberals, Centrists, Centrists of Right or Left and Progressive. Obviously, this classification is not to be considered as exhaustive and clear-cut. In principle, conservative think tanks are advocates of the free market; liberal think tanks emphasize the importance of laissez-faire in economy, as opposed to excessive government intervention policies; social centrists can be regarded as a synthesis between conservatives and liberals, and define themselves as detached and non-partisan bodies; finally, the progressive think tanks that support state intervention in economic policy and, at the same time, limit the action with regard to social issues.

The Department of State, in 2002, included the following think thanks and their respective websites as the most representative in the U.S.:

The Role of Think Tanks in U.S. Foreign Policy
A SELECTION OF INTERNET SITES

There are approximately 1,500 think tanks in the United States. The list below, far from inclusive, is intended to give a representative sampling or cross section of think tanks that deal with U.S. foreign policy issues. For a more comprehensive view, use the last two Internet references or URL's, which provide many more links to think tanks. Please note that the U.S. Department of State assumes no responsibility for the content and availability of the resources listed below; such responsibility resides solely with the providers.

American Enterprise Institute
http://www.aei.org/

Aspen Institute
http://www.aspeninst.org/

Atlantic Council of the United States
http://www.acus.org/

Brookings Institution: Foreign Policy Studies
http://www.brook.edu/dybdocroot/fp/fp_hp.htm

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
http://www.ceip.org/

Cato Institute: Foreign Policy
http://www.cato.org/foreignpolicy/index.html

Center for Strategic and International Studies
http://www.csis.org/

Council on Foreign Relations
http://www.cfr.org/

Foreign Policy Research Institute
http://www.fpri.org/

Heritage Foundation
http://www.heritage.org/

Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford University
http://www-hoover.stanford.edu/

Hudson Institute
http://www.hudson.org/

Institute for Defense Analyses
http://www.ida.org/

The Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis
http://www.ifpa.org/

Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy
http://www.imtd.org/

John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University
http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/kennedy.shtml

National Defense University
http://www.ndu.edu/

New America Foundation
http://www.newamerica.net/

RAND: Foreign and Security Policy
http://www.rand.org/interpol_area/forsec/

Stimson Center
http://www.stimson.org/

U.S. Institute of Peace
http://www.usip.org/

Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
http://wwics.si.edu/

Lehman Social Sciences Library, Columba University
http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/lehman/guides/ttanks.html

University of North Carolina
http://www.ibiblio.org/ucis/Nonprofit.html

Fig. n. 1. The most important think thanks and their websites according to the U.S Department of State (2002).

However, following Diletti (2009) and Rich (2005), think tanks can be classified according to their political approach in six categories, ranging from Conservative to Progressive centres:

1.   Conservative

Heritage Foundation
American Enterprise Institute
Hudson Institute
Hoover Institution
Progress and Freedom Foundation
Manhattan Institute
Competitive Enterprise Institute
Family Research Council
National Center for Policy Analysis

2.   Liberal/Conservative

Reason Foundation
Cato Institute

3.   Centre – Right

Washington Institute for Near East Policy
RAND Corporation
Center for Strategic and International Studies

4.   Centre

Institute for International Economics
Milken Institute
National Bureau of Economic Research

Council on Foreign Relations

Freedom Forum

Economic Strategy Institute

Progressive Policy Institute

Public Policy Institute of California

Resources for the Future

Baker Institute

5.   Centre - Left

Urban Institute

Carter Center

Brookings Institution

New America Foundation

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

6.   Progressive

Citizens for Tax Justice

Center for American Progress

Justice Policy Institute

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

Center for Public Integrity

Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

Worldwatch Institute

Center for Defence Information

Institute for Policy Studies

Economic Policy Institute

1.4 Right-wing *vs.* left wing think tanks: aims

"We man the ivory towers as well as the trenches in the war of ideas. We define the objectives, devise the strategies, and manufacture the ammunition. The war of ideas is a war of words—a war of intellect. It is a war of great importance... Lenin put it this way: 'Ideas are much more fatal things than guns.' "

"Ideas like Supply Side economics, privatization, enterprise zones, and the flat tax are produced by individuals first—the academic scribblers, as Keynes would call them. But it takes an institution to help popularize and propagandize an idea—to market an idea."

Selling ideas takes time. Proctor and Gamble does not sell Crest toothpaste by placing one newspaper ad or running one television commercial. They sell it and resell it every day by keeping the product fresh in the consumer's mind. Organizations like Heritage Foundation sell ideas in much the same manner."

Ed Feulner, Jr., former President of The Heritage Foundation, 1986.[4]

Almost awkwardly, America's best known conservative think tank quotes Lenin. Although Edwin Feulner, former President of The Heritage Foundation, despised Lenin's views on economics, he recognised his capacity to properly use ideas and ideology to ground political power. As a matter of fact, any political movement relies on think tanks or research centres to boost its policies and influence the political agenda.

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[4] Ed Feulner was President of The Heritage Foundation from 1977 to 2013.

Apparently, the function of think tanks is to provide analysis and develop argumentation for political groups and movements. As already mentioned in this work, some remarkable examples include the Heritage Foundation, American Enterprise Institute, and Manhattan Institute, representing different kinds of conservatism; Brookings Institute and New America Foundation represent the middle view, while the Center for American Progress is a left-wing public policy research and advocacy organization representing a center-left or progressive attitude.

However, not to deny think tanks' actual relevance on both sides of the political spectrum, there are many important differences between those on the left and those on the right. Some of these differences have been broadly pictured, for example, by Andrew Rich in his article "The War of Ideas" (2005a) and especially in his *Think Tanks, Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise* (2005b), although their distinctive features are still hard to tackle, and the politicization of think tanks is becoming a real problem (Brodwin 2013). [5]

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[5] Foundations' total spending to support think tanks exceeds several hundred million dollars per year, not to mention private philanthropy as well (especially addressed to right-wing think tanks). It can be easily affirmed that think tanks on both sides are quite well funded. For example, it is well known that conservative Heritage Foundation revenue in 2008 was $63 million, while, on the left, Center for American Progress revenue was $29 million for 2007 (see Brodwin 2013).

1.4.1 *Basic differences between left and right-wing think tanks*

Three remarkable and well functioning aspects of conservative think tank organizations should be highlighted, in order to draw a clear distinction from progressive centres (see Brodwin 2007; Diletti 2009; Lakoff 1997).

- Promotion: they promote their conservative world view as a mission, a moral imperative (see Lakoff 1997);
- Media and public relations: they invest heavily in promoting their ideas, understanding the importance of media relations and creating a marketing structure around their marketing;
- Cooperation: they strategically work with other conservative organizations (party, movements, associations etc.) in order to maximize their impact as a whole.

It must be said that not all think tanks on the left and right can be included within these criteria. For example, similarly to what happens on the right, the Center for American Progress (a progressive centre) was founded in 2003 with the goal of building a structure suitable for marketing and promotion purposes; likewise, the Institute for Policy Studies, another progressive think tank, embraces the mission of "ideas into action". On the other side, not all conservative think tanks promote ideas as aggressively as Heritage does.

As it comes out from this work, it can be relevant to try and define what aspects distinguish left- and right-wing oriented think tanks by investigating their *mission,* which involves a crucial difference between investment in the promotion of ideas, more noticeable and predictable for right-wing oriented centres, against a substantial investment in the production of ideas, which seems a distinctive feature of left-wing oriented think tanks.

1.5　　What's the mission? Truth vs. marketing

Left-wing and right—wing think tanks have so far 'framed' their mission in fundamentally different terms (see Lakoff 1995). To put it simply, many think tanks on the left see their mission as a search for truth. Basically, they conform to a university research paradigm. The language which is used to spread their word comes from their originating beliefs. Many think tanks on the right side, instead, see their mission as crafting arguments to support specific policy goals and conservative ideology in general. The paradigm is that of public relations *"tout-court"*. The language is predictably smoother and easier to get to the point.

Example n. 1: the Heritage Foundation

The conservative Heritage Foundation is an excellent example. As a matter of fact, part of the Foundation's mission statement is very explicit:

"To formulate and promote conservative public policies based on the principles of free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong national defense" [6]

This mission statement is striking enough, since everything seemingly starts from principles and values, not analysis and data.

A similar mission statement seems to guide another leading conservative think tank, the American Enterprise Institute:

"AEI is dedicated to preserving and strengthening the foundations of a free society-- limited government, competitive private enterprise, vital cultural and political institutions, and vigilant defense--through rigorous inquiry, debate, and writing". [7]

If duly taking into account Heritage's mission, then, there is no surprise noticing how the Heritage policy papers show very little actual research, if research means hypothesis backed up by properly collected and analyzed data. Instead, most of their publications often mimic *op-eds,* to give the idea of a more immediate and flexible way of communicate. The principles

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[6] http://www.heritage.org/about
[7] www.aei.org

in their mission statement are expanded upon creatively to formulate arguments for the policies they support, by ruthlessly using any modern language at their disposal to reach as much valuable audience in the quickest way as possible. As a factual example of that, very often, the report titles convey policy recommendations directly, making no mention of data, as shown by the headlines below:

- *"The Economic Role of Government: Focus on Stability, Not Spending"* [8]
- *"The Max Tax: Baucus Health Bill Is More of the Same"* [9]

The way Heritage mission influences its reports and their delivery tends to amplify its effectiveness in two ways:

a) a great deal of Heritage publications serves a dual purpose: in the short term, to speed up the specific policy positions they favour; over the long term, to reinforce and create a strong consensus on conservative matters.

b) Heritage output is purposely designed and structured so that other participants in the conservative movement (legislators, media commentators, leaders of advocacy groups, etc.,) can easily absorb the product and use it for their own purposes. It is no surprise, then, to realize how the immediate practical utility, deriving from their easier and ruthless

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[8] http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2009/09/the-economic-role-of-government-focus-on-stability-not-spending

[9] http://www.heritage.org/research/factsheets/the-max-tax-baucus-health-bill-is-more-of-the-same

way of using communicative means and any type of new language, can actually attract more money for their operations.

Example n. 2: Center for Budget and Policy Priorities

Let's make a comparison between the already examined Heritage mission statement with the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, a major center-left or progressive think tank with a $16 million budget. The Center is widely respected and committed to outstanding work on a broadest range of issues. Its mission is described as follows:

"The Center conducts research and analysis to help shape public debates over proposed budget and tax policies and to help ensure that policymakers consider the needs of low-income families and individuals in these debates. We also develop policy options to alleviate poverty." [10]

Two are apparently the key differences between this mission and Heritage's mission: the lack of a broad statement of liberal or progressive political principles, and the emphasis on research as a method of election. Accordingly, the reports featured on their home page proudly master a tone of factual reporting rather than argumentative support to specific goals. For example, some headlines are formulated in the following way:

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[10] www.cbbp.lorg/about

- *"Poverty Rose, Median Income Fell, & Job-Based Health Insurance Weakened in 2008"* [11]

as well as

- *"Top 1 Percent of Americans Reaped Two-Thirds of Income Gains in Last Economic Expansion"[12]*

The reader here is regarded as an active part of the process of information acquisition, rather than a mere final addressee of a pre-customized language. For this reason, there is no need to simplify concepts, given as an assumption that anyone who reads the articles published by the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities is skilled enough, thus able to understand any type of language if supported by sound data and analysis. This material is regarded as true as it is based upon data and analysis; on the other hand, it is very difficult that this type of formulations can penetrate the news cycle or have an impact on the political agenda.

[11] http://www.cbpp.org/files/9-10-09pov.pdf
[12] http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?id=2908&fa=view

Chapter two

2.1 A mediated world

In the last 50 years the media influence has grown exponentially with the advance of technology; we live in a society that depends on information and communication to keep going, and we get those information from the media, which are our window on the world outside.

This has lead to a situation where modern humanity is increasingly experiencing a mediated world rather than reality itself:

> One of the major features of our current transition into the Age of the Mass Communication, then, is that increasingly we are in contact with mediated representations of a complex physical and social world rather than only with the objective features of our narrow surroundings (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach 1989: 259).

We live in a mass mediated society, where electronic media play important, often invisible and taken-for-granted roles in our everyday lives. Media shape our reality, reconstruct it and continue to present and diffuse these reconstructions of reality rather than accurate representations.

According to Fowler (1991), "news are not a reflection of reality, but a product shaped by political, economical and cultural forces". It should be noted, however, that media in general do not deliberately decide to deceive anyone, to manipulate or abuse their audiences. The ethical codes of journalism dominate most of the newsmaking process, but there are factors beyond the editors and journalists' control which may trigger arbitrary reconstructions of reality.

The selection process in the media, due to the constraints of limited space and time is the first source of such partial and thus distorted presentation of reality: not all the events are reported (journalists and experts have to decide what is news and which is not) and those who are presented are usually "reconstructed" through different means.

2.2   Opinions and ideologies

Editorials and op-ed articles are obviously expected to express opinions. These opinions are related to the political stance and may vary according to the ideological presuppositions behind them. Commonly, ideologies influence their opinions, thus having heavy repercussions on the discourse structure of their articles. But what do actually mean by *ideologies* in discoursal terms? This concept has been heavy debated, and many theoretical approaches have provided several definitions.

Van Dijk' s account (1998, 2003) of ideologies involves three different components:

A- *Social functions*. A theory of ideologies must focus on how ideologies influence individuals and groups in a societal structure.

B- *Cognitive structures.* How are ideologies structured within the individuals' minds and how does it relate with other cognitive structures and social representations such as shared values, opinions and knowledge and personal and contextual models such as experience and intentions on the other hand.

C- *Discursive expression and reproduction.* How ideologies manifest themselves in social practices (especially text and talk).

Traditionally, ideologies have always been seen as controlling tools employed by dominant classes to reproduce and legitimate their power. Van Dijk partially refuses this assumption, stating that dominated group also need ideologies, e.g. as a basis for resistance; this means that ideologies *per se* are not wrong or right, but rather more or less effective in promoting their group's interests. The main goal of ideologies, in this case, is to promote the co-ordination of the social practices of group members needed to reach the objective of a social group. Given this general function, van Dijk finally agrees on the fact that many ideologies develop precisely in order to sustain, legitimate or manage group conflicts, as well as relationships with power and dominance.

In order for ideologies to really influence social practices, it is necessary that, somehow, ideologies should be tailored to social functions. In other words, what people *do* as group members should reflect what people *think* as group members and viceversa, in a relation studied in terms of social

cognition. Social practices presuppose a vast amount of shared beliefs, knowledge, norms, values and ideologies. These values represent the basic principles that govern social judgement, that separates the wrong from right, the true from false.

It is not clear how ideologies look like, but many group ideologies revolve around a simple polarization: the representation of Self versus the Others, of Us vs. Them. In short, *We* are Good and *They* are Bad, especially when conflicting interests are involved. This basic assumption of positive self-representation and negative other-presentation may influence a huge amount of opinions that *We* have against *Them* in more specific social domains; for instance racist ideologies may create prejudices against minorities or immigrants in matters of immigration, residence, employment or education. To put it simple, the main cognitive function of ideologies is to organize specific group attitudes.

Generally, according to Van Dijk (1998) ideologies reflect the criteria that constitute social identity and define the interests of a group: who belongs to the group, what we do, why and how, how we relate with other groups and what we have. These are all questions which define the ideology of a group. Of course, the way members represent themselves can be biased when seen from the point of view of others .

Ideologies, like other social representations of the mind are social because they are socially shared, they are a form of general and abstract knowledge. Of course, through socialization, members may acquire slightly different versions of these social representations and some may have more complex ideological systems than others, but this does not necessarily

mean that ideologies do not exist. Individuals may belong to several social groups, thus having different ideologies, each one influencing the other in particular situations; this explains why personal uses of ideologies tends to be variable and contradictory in concrete occasions.

Mental models

General group ideologies can be expressed directly through discourse, for instance manifesting opinions. However much opinion discourse is more specific and reflects not only group ideologies, but also personal knowledge, beliefs and opinions about specific topics or situations. These opinions derive from socially shared attitudes, people's own personal experience and evaluations as they are represented in the so called *mental models* (Van Dijk 1998).

Mental models represent people's everyday experiences, such as the observation or participation in events, actions or discourse. They are subjective and personal; models influence what people think and know about specific events, and are fundamental for subjective interpretation. People continually 'model' the events of their lives, including communicative events they engage in or news event they read about in the press; they remember these models, although some of them derive from their group opinions. Models are the link between social representations, including ideologies in one hand, and social practices and discourse on the other hand.

Mental models represent what people know and think about a situation, therefore they control the "content" or semantics of a discourse. Of course, since people think and know more than they usually say, we must assume that only a part of information from a model is expressed; this is the same for opinions: people do not always say or write what they really think about a topic. Even the opposite is true, people tend to understand much more from a text than what is actually written in it.

Context models

It has already been noticed that people form models also through communicative events: these so-called *context models* usually feature the overall definition of the situation and the actors involved with their respective roles, their aims and so on. Context models represent *how* communication is done, and are important in the production and comprehension of discourse.

Opinions

Opinions, on the other hand, are evaluative beliefs, that is beliefs that presuppose a value and that involve a judgment about somebody or something, such as A is bad or B is beautiful, depending on the values of a specific group or culture. Evaluative beliefs must be separated from factual

beliefs, that involve categorizations which are generally considered true. For instance, is the belief "smoking is bad" an evaluative or a factual belief? It features a typical evaluative concept (bad) and therefore looks like an opinion, but if supported by scientific research it may be seen as a fact.

It all depends on the grounds or criteria of judgement. If these grounds only belong to a particular group or class view of the world, then it is probably an opinion. However, if the grounds are socially shared and based on some kind of knowledge, then it is probably a fact (true or false). Of course these grounds and criteria are historically and culturally relative; every social group may have its own schemata of truth criteria.

Opinions and ideologies are often said to represent the truth for specific groups of people, but that does not make them factual in our sense. As soon as norms and values are involved, they are evaluative and not factual.

2.3.   The ideological square

The first thing to do when approaching a text is the analysis of its lexical items. Words may be chosen generally to express a value judgement (such as using the term "terrorist"), others are often used to express an opinion (such as "beautiful", "dirty", "intelligent"); others instead may be used either factually or evaluatively, according to the system of knowledge involved (saying that an environment is polluted may be the writer's opinion or be supported by scientific research, therefore becoming factual).

Opinions in text and talk may be expressed in several ways: for instance in headlines, structures, graphical arrangements, overall topics and so on. Concepts and their expression in lexical items usually combine into propositions expressed by clauses and sentences; a word implying an opinion does not mean much if we do not take into account the meaning of the sentence in which it occurs.

Propositions are usually analyzed in terms of predicates (actions, properties and events) and roles (agent, patient). These basic elements are usually modified in several ways. Each of these elements and concepts may feature implied opinions. For example, choosing "desperate" instead of "cold-blooded" as a modifier for the word "terrorist" implies a less negative opinion, suggesting that the terrorist was forced to do it. The same effect may be obtained by choosing other modalities, such as "they were obliged to...". This use of necessity modalities is quite frequent in text or talks that try to limit the negative impact of actions of the *We* group.

Moreover, it is not only the concepts involved in a proposition that may express opinions, but also the structure of the proposition itself. Usually, people's actions appearing in the Agent role are emphasized, because of this prominent position in the syntactic structure of a sentence. Viceversa, passive construction tends to de-emphasize actions of person or groups put in the passive role.

According to van Dijk (1998), there is a general strategy through which OUR people tend to appear primarily as actors when the acts are good, and THEIR people when the acts are bad; viceversa, THEIR people will appear less as actors when the acts are good and OURS when our actions are

negative. This strategy of polarization (positive in-group description vs. negative out-group description) has created a four-point evaluative structure, which we may call the 'Ideological Square':

-Emphasize our good properties/actions

-Emphasize their bad properties/actions

-Mitigate our bad properties/actions

-Mitigate their good properties/actions

(Van Dijk 1998: 33).

This strategy may be expressed in the choice of lexical items, as well in the structure of whole propositions and their categories. Opinions are not always directly expressed in a proposition, but they also may be implied. This means that from a basic proposition, there is a *n* number of meanings that may be inferred on the basis of an event model or context model.

Moving on to the proper discursive level of sequences of propositions, it has to be noticed that events may be described at various levels of generality or specificity, and with a complex or simple structure of propositions at each level.

According to the ideological square, we may expect OUR good actions and THEIR negative ones to be given more importance, with many detailed propositions. OUR bad actions and THEIR good ones instead, if described at all, will be expressed in a "detached" way and without giving much detail.

Another important condition of textuality is *coherence*, that is the property of sequential sentences in text and talk that defines why they form

a unity and are not put together arbitrarily. According to van Dijk (1998), a sequence of sentences is coherent if a model can be constructed for it. This may involve causal or conditional relations between the facts as represented by a model; coherence is both relative and referential: it is defined according to relations between facts in a model which is referred to or talked about.

Strategies of positive self-representation and negative other-representation may be also applied at the micro-level of sentences. One clause may express a proposition that realizes one strategy, while another may realize the other; this is the case of disclaimers ("I have nothing against you, but..."). In these semantic moves, also known as Apparent Denial, the speaker emphasizes his tolerance in the first clause, while saying negative things in the second clause. The same schemata can be applied for Apparent Concessions ("There are also intelligent southern people, but..."), Apparent Empathy ("I know it's hard, but.."), and so on (van Dijk 1998).

These strategies are used to manage opinions and impressions, that is what the listener/reader will think of us. The objective of disclaimers is to put a strategic preface to the negative part of our discourse, to avoid being considerate intolerant or racist, for instance.

Another important concept related to the notions of ideologies and opinions is the "position"; that is the point of view, the perspective of the speaker from which events are evaluated. This subjective perspective is often pointed out by pronouns (we, I), adverbs (here, today) and position-dependent nouns such us (home, neighbour, sister) among other

expressions. Pragmatically, personal perspective is usually expressed by locutions such as "in my opinion", "from my point of view" etc. The plural forms of these expression may indicate the membership to a social group.

2.4   Political discourse in the media

The objective of some works by Norman Fairclough works (especially Fairclough 1995, 1998, 2003) is to set out an analytical framework for investigating political discourse in the contemporary mass media. The political discourse is seen as an order of discourse, that is:

> *a structured configuration of genres and discourses associated with a given social domain which is constantly changing according to the wider processes of social and cultural changes which are affecting the media and any other social domain linked to them* (Foucault 1970)[13].

The first issue that Fairclough faces in his studies is the delimitation of what can be considered political or not. Fairclough uses a characterization of politics as an interaction of different societal systems, as suggested by Held (Held 1987): the political system, the social system and economy. The nature of politics in different times and places relates to the way these systems interact.

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[13] From M. Foucault, *The Order of Discourse,* 1970, cited in Shapiro M., *Language and Politics,* Oxford, Blackwell, 1984, p. 113-4.

In a discourse perspective, the shifting nature of politics can be expressed in its shifting articulations of orders of discourse. Contemporary political discourse articulates together orders of discourse from the political system, science, media and technology, ordinary private life and so on.

In expressing this, Fairclough refers to Bourdieu's insight that the political discourse is doubly determined (Bourdieu 1991): it is internally determined by its position in the political structure and externally by its relationship to fields outside politics.

In terms of Critical Discourse Analysis, the power struggles to achieve hegemony in two ways:

-internally, within the order of discourse of the political system in the articulation of the different discursive practices;

-externally, in the articulation of different systems and orders of discourse; the struggle for hegemony is a struggle between political parties and political tendencies.

In short, the external struggle for hegemony is a fight between professional politicians and other social agents in fields which collide with politics: think tanks experts, journalists in the mass media, grassroots activists in social movements etc.

It is essential, for the comprehension of Fairclough's framework, the identification of the main categories of *agents* which figure in mass media politics.

Professional politicians and journalists are the first that come to mind. Another category is that of 'experts', that we will consider in the next chapter: political analysts, academics, political scientists. Then we have

economic agents (employers, trade unionists) and also ordinary people, who recently have started to play a bigger part in political conversations and debate in audience discussion programs. All these agents are potentially protagonists and antagonists in a struggle for hegemony in the media, and also potential allies of course.

To operate successfully in the media, agents must learn to use the discourses and genres of the media. Media genres involve a complex mixture of genres taken from other domains (such as the political debate) which are re-contextualized within the media. Audience programmes such as *The Oprah Winfrey Show* combine three different genres, only one of which is political: debate, romance and therapy (Livingstone 1994).

In short, Fairclough's framework for the analysis of the political discourse can be summarized by answering to six questions:

1- Who are the political agents involved and what genres, discourses and ethos are drawn upon?

2- How are they articulated together?

3- How is this articulation realized in the forms and meanings of the text?

4- How are the resources of the order of discourse drawn upon in the management if interaction?

5- What particular direction does this type of discursive event give to the articulation of the political order of discourse?

6- What wider social and cultural processes shape and are shaped by the way this discursive event articulates genres, discourses and ethos?

The value of this approach is that it avoids particular discursive events to be treated in isolation from the orders of discourse and the wider social fields and processes they are embedded within.

2.5   What is *news*?

What is news? Bignell (1997) suggests that:

> news is not just facts, but representations produced in language and other signs like photographs (Bignell 1997: 81).

The newspaper is just one medium of news communication; other media, exploited by U.S: think tanks, include television, radio, magazines, and the Internet.

The answer to this question may seem obvious: news is what is new, it is what is happening. In the dictionary, news is defined as: *a report of recent events or previously unknown information[14]*.

According to van Dijk (1988) news can be seen as new information or as a news article, but also as a TV program in which news is presented; in other words the term news implies the following concepts:

1 New information about events, things or persons.
*   1   A (TV or radio) program type in which news items are presented.*

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[14] Taken from online *Merriam-Webster*, on www.m-w.com.

2   A news item or news report, i.e., a text or discourse on radio, on TV or in the newspaper, in which new information is given about recent events (van Dijk 1988).

According to van Dijk then, news may refer to a news item in the physical sense or to the content and meaning of such an item; to the whole discourse including its physical shape or to its semantic nature of information as given by the media.

2.5.1   The structure of news

Thematic structures

The first thing to analyze in news discourse is its thematic organization, that is everything involving the concept of topic or theme. The topic is, generally, what the discourse is about; it does not relate to a single word or sentence, but belongs to the global level of discourse, it is a semantic macrostructure (van Dijk 1972).

In the press, topics may be signaled by the headlines, which apparently act as summaries of the news text. They define the overall situation and indicate to the reader the preferred overall meaning of the text.

The topics of news discourse are not simply a list; they are instead hierarchically organized according to a coherent structure, i.e. their relevance. In other words, antecedents of news events may be expressed later in the text, while the main event is introduced earlier, in the headline.

This concept goes by the name of the top-down principle of relevance organization in news:

> News discourse is organized so that the most important or relevant information is put in the most prominent position, both in the text as a whole, and in the sentences. (van Dijk 1988.)

This means that for each topic the most important information is presented first with further specifications, while earlier topics are reintroduced later providing more details.

Readers will get the salient information immediately, and partial reading will result only in missing a few, lower-level details. Top-down organization of the topics allows editors to cut the final paragraphs of a news story without the loss of essential information.

News Schemata

News discourse has its own global structure in which topics and themes are inserted and organized. This structure can be defined in terms of a schema based on rules and categories, which may be specific for particular discourse types and vary according to society and culture.

For instance, stories generally present the narrative categories of: Summary, Setting, Complication, Resolution and Coda (Labov & Waletzky 1967).

According to Van Dik (1988), news discourse has its own peculiar categories. For instance, every item in the press has a Headline, and may have a Lead; both these elements precede the others in a text and serve as a summary of news. Another common category in news discourse is that of Background. Usually Background follows later in a text, that is after the category of Main Events; it is the description of the history behind the Main Events and must not be confused with the category of Context, which provides information about the actual situation. The Previous Events category is used instead to remind the reader about something which has happened recently; of course the differences between these categories are signaled by adverbs and different verbs and verb tenses.

Another common category is that of the Consequences, which refers to the effects of the events; within it, a peculiar case is that of Verbal Reactions, which consists in the comments of opinions leaders and allows the journalists to formulate opinions that are not necessarily their own. Verbal Reactions are signaled by names and roles, and by direct or indirect quotations.

Finally, some news item features a Comment, that is the direct or indirect evaluations by the writer on the matter; Comments category consists of two major subcategories: Evaluations and Expectations. Evaluations feature the evaluative opinions about the actual news event, Expectations formulates possible consequences of the actual situation and predictions.

News Discourse Style

Style of news reports in the press is controlled by its communicative context; that is the written discourse of a printed text. The journalist never addresses directly to the reader (there is no "you" in the press, for instance). Moreover news is a public discourse; this presupposes that our message is addressed to an audience which shares with us some knowledge, beliefs, norms and values.

News discourse is also *impersonal*; it is not produced and expressed by a single individual, but by institutional organizations, public or private. The writer is only a mediator of the facts, a, impartial observer (of course this is not the case of editorials). Clearly, underlying attitudes and beliefs may appear indirectly in the text in many ways (in the selection and elaboration of topics, for instance), but the main goal is always to be as impersonal as possible.

News style is also related to the nature of topics; in general the report of a sport event tends to be less formal compared to a hard news about foreign politics.

Finally, news production process involves some common stylistic marks: deadlines require fast writing and editing, thus we may expect fixed patterns of sentences used to describe recurrent properties of news events. There are also space constraints which necessitate a compact writing style; sentences are packed with as much information as possible, while full propositions are often condensed through nominalizations.

Another peculiar feature of news style is the use of active and passive sentences, and the agent or subject position of news actors in the sentences, which somehow reveals the newspaper's implicit stance towards these actors. Actors such as authorities who did something negative are often placed in a passive position, not as agents, thus making their role in the matter appear less relevant.

Finally, the choice of words in news discourse is another important marker of the style. Words reflex the relationship between speech partners, the attitudes and ideologies of the speaker; there is a huge difference, for instance, between *terrorist* and *freedom fighter*.

Rhetoric of News Discourse

Rhetoric, like style, is related to the way we say things. But, while style is directly influenced by the context, rhetoric depends on the goals and intended effects of communication, its objective is to bring the reader on our side, to persuade him that our reasons and beliefs are right.

Persuasion in news discourse involves that not only the reader must accept our speech as news, but he also must accept it as the truth or at least a possible truth. Readers have to believe in what the newspaper says. Of course this requires a minimum coherence with the beliefs and values that the reader already has; a text can persuade us only when it already assumes a point of view which is similar to ours, explicitly or implicitly.

Content of news needs to be noticed, understood, represented, memorized, believed and integrated by the reader. (van Dijk 1988).

To promote the persuasion process, news discourse applies several strategies (see Tuchman, 1972), such as:

-Emphasize the factual nature of events;

-Build a strong relational structure (i.e. putting events in a cause-effect relationship);

-Provide information that have an attitudinal and emotional dimension.

Attention to 'hard' news, violence, sex and scandals satisfies the rhetoric of emotions and covers the majority of what in the Western countries is consumed as news.

To persuade readers, journalists also try to get first-hand evidence from their correspondents or reporters; after all, the direct observation is the ultimate warranty of truthfulness. Similarly, eyewitness reports in an interview for instance, may be used as a necessary substitute of the reporter's own observations; their words tend to be taken as the truth by the readers.

Another common tool in news discourse rhetoric is the quotation of sources: these sources are hierarchically organized (a public authority is seen as more reliable compared to a bystander) and are supposed to indicate the truth of the facts; moreover they protect the journalist from slander and libel and give him the opportunity to introduce opinions without abandoning his characteristic neutral stance (journalists cannot

express directly their opinions, but can introduce those of the new actors who share their point of view).

Finally, another common rhetoric tool to suggest truthfulness is the employment of precise numbers in a text. Numerical indications signal precision in a report and are hence a warranty of reliability.

We may conclude that news rhetoric involves not only the use of the ordinary figures of speech, but also strategic devices that enhance truthfulness, plausibility and precision.

2.5.2 News production

News production is about the production and writing processes of news texts.

It is not yet well known how a source text gets transformed into several final versions of a news text; how the processes of source text understanding, representation and summarization take place and how this information is used in the processes of news production.

Interpretation of events

Most news is based on sources such as texts and talk, but sometimes it may also be based on the news events in their own right. One central question is to determine when an event is considered a news event, thus having news value. It is usually assumed that if an event matches the

criteria of news value known by the journalist, then it has a higher chance to be selected as a potential news event.

As a result from monitoring an event, the journalist creates a socially-monitored mental model of the situation in his memory; this mental model is the basis for the production of a discourse, and hence, news.

The reporter needs to retrieve as much information as possible about the event, information which will be stored into his memory according to a hierarchical organization mediated by the implicit news value criteria; e.g. an air crash is more newsworthy than a bank robbery, which in turn is more newsworthy than a scratch on a car. Newsworthy events are higher in the hierarchy, are represented with higher details and have a better chance of being used in news production.

Not all the events have the potential to become news events. Journalist must filter them according to a various range of concepts such as public interest, difference, non-routine, size, negative consequences and so on. Moreover, news events are constrained to their time, location and actors. Time is essential due to the deadlines of journalism, location requires accessibility and actors relate to a schema which involves accessibility, political and social power, visibility or simple participation in highly negative or spectacular events.

Processing source texts

Most news, however, is not based on direct observation of events, but derives its information from discourse. We should distinguish between discourses which are itself news events, such as declarations from politicians, and discourses that are only used for their information content, not for the news value of the communicative event in which they were produced.

Discourses as news events must be accessed, observed, interpreted and memorized just like any other action, yet they are a pre-formulated information, which already contain opinions and ideologies of the speaker and thus the reporter's objective, in this case, is to copy the source discourse through the use of quotations.

The same happens for discourses which are not news events; portions of the text may be selected, copied, quoted or summarized.

The first resource for processing source texts is selection. The choice to select one item instead of another may be based on reading and evaluation or be made *a priori*, according to the credibility or authority of the source (between a police report and a bystander eyewitness, the journalist will always choose the first one).

Once a part of a source text has been selected, the literal reproduction of it is by far the easiest strategy: copying large parts of agency dispatches with a slight change of style is a fast way to produce news, especially when there are no other sources available and we have little knowledge of the news event.

Another major strategy is the summarization: this strategy revolves around the three concepts of Deletion, Generalization and Construction. Deletion applies to the local information which is no longer necessary, Generalization occurs when similar properties are relevant for a group of actors or when a given property can be applied to different members, and Construction requires the combination of several micro-events into an overall macro-event.

Of course summarization is a subjective process, which presupposes personal decisions on which is important and which not.

Summarization takes place at every stage of the source text and news text processing and allows the journalist to reduce large text in shorter text, define the most important information, compare different sources and reduce the information complexity, thus being a powerful tool for the design of the final article. Journalist may not only summarize a source text, but also transform it, replacing words, sentences or paragraphs with comparable fragments of another text.

This may be done through: Deletion of controversial information, which will be replaced by the one provided by a more reliable source; Addition of other elements taken from other texts, Permutations (a change in the structure of the source text, with the most relevant information moved up) and Substitution of items with others provided by other sources.

Transformations of the text can also be merely stylistic or rhetorical: style change is an effective way to express personal opinions or ideologies in the text while writing about the same events and rhetorical

reformulations allow the reporter to make a story more effective and entertaining.

After all these processes on the source text, the final version may be published or edited again, to enhance readability and comprehension or may also be completely abandoned in favor of another, more appealing, story.

News Value

The selection of news value has always been explained in terms of news value. There are values about newsworthiness of a discourse or event which are shared among the journalists and people working in the industry, like think tank experts.

Accessibility of sources favors stories and news actors which have a stable relationship with the press, such as spokesmen and press conferences. This explains the special interest for opinion leaders, politicians and social elites. This special attention for élite persons and groups builds up a vicious cycle in which these actors turn to be dominant and journalist on the other hand keep on producing stories about these same elites.

However, according to Van Dijk (1988), there are a number of specific cognitive constraints that define news values:

Novelty: news should in principle be about new events.

Recency: not all new information can be turned into *news*; for the press, the event described must be recent, within a margin of between one and several days.

Presupposition: journalist must assume that the reader may not know anything about the topic or may have forgotten previous information; therefore presupposed information may require a summary of previous events to be fully comprehended.

Consonance: news should be consonant with socially-shared norms, beliefs and attitudes. It is easier to understand and accept something that shares our opinions and ideologies. News about something which clashes with our attitudes has fewer chances to be covered unless it confirms our negative schemata about that something and the perspective of the description is consonant with these schemata.

Relevance: information is preferred if it is relevant for the readers. Of course there may be different groups of readers, with various interests and expectations; usually relevance is related to the interests of the powerful, larger groups. Therefore, news meeting these interests will be covered, while those against them will be ignored or under-covered.

Deviance and Negativity: it has been demonstrated that most of the news discourse is about negative events such as wars, problems, scandals, crime or disasters. It seems that people are interested in such news, even though it is not easy to explain why. Psychoanalytically, these various forms of negativity may be seen as expressions of our fears and therefore getting in touch with them through the media may serve the purpose to exorcize them, as a self-defense mechanism. At the same time, this information,

especially when it is about a minority group, may serve the purpose to confirm the difference in norms and values between our group and the outcasts. Of course, negative stories need happy ends to really help us in the eventuality of a disaster; thus the special attention in crime news for the role of police, for instance. There is always the need for a hero to solve the situation, otherwise negative news stories without positive elements would be hard to digest.

Proximity: this point is related to consonance; media messages about local events (even in a spatial way, i.e. the events of our hometown) are better understood because they are based on models that are more complete and available (Kahneman - Tversky, 1973). Moreover, this news may be useful for the reader in his/her everyday activities and interactions.

2.5.3 News comprehension

News comprehension involves several steps: perception and attention; reading; decoding and interpretation; representation in episodic memory; formation, uses and updating of situation models; uses and changes of general, social knowledge and beliefs (van Dijk 1988; van Dijk – Kintsch 1983).

Perception and attention

This is an obvious requirement for reading and comprehension. Adequate understanding of a text requires complete attention on it, since any external interference may prejudice our comprehension giving birth to misunderstandings.

Perception involves the ability to identify news items and distinguish them from other things such as advertisements, comic strips or stock market tables. Perception of a news item is often related to the headline, used as a marker capable of drawing people's attention and identify the media source.

Reading

Reading involves the process of decoding and understanding: when we read a page we are attentively examining the text, decoding it and also trying to interpret its message.

Reading is based on decisions and knowledge: we may skim through a text, starting from the headline, and in any given moment decide that we already know enough about the topic and select another article on another page; since reading is time constrained, we may assume that most of the article are only partially read, thus the usual top-bottom structure of news discourse comes in handy.

Understanding

Since reading usually starts from the headline, the first step in understanding a text is in the decoding and interpretation of headlines.

Headlines and lead usually provide the most important, necessary information of an article; interpreting the headline presupposes a certain degree of knowledge and, at the same time, new opinions are formed or existing ones are recalled about the events featured in it.

After the reading and interpretation of the headlines of a news article, the control system (of the reader) should feature the following information:

1. Macrostructure of the context of communication;

2. Schematic of a news discourse, which allows the reader to recognize and evaluate the headlines as a Headline of a news schema in the first place;

3. A tentative semantic macrostructure fragment for the news article;

4. Macro-structural information about relevant situation models, scripts, or other schematic beliefs, such as opinions and attitudes about the denoted events and their components;

5. A partial reading plan, involving the decision to carry on reading, to read a little bit, etc. (see van Dijk 1988).

In order to understand a headline, its grammatical structure must be analyzed: headlines usually lack articles and verb auxiliaries, and usually we must know what they are talking about to fully comprehend the topic. A

basic knowledge of foreign politics is required, for instance, to proper understand a headline about a political scandal abroad.

After the headline has been interpreted, it is time to analyze the lead. Leads usually provide the specifications of what is not included in the headline, thus providing all of the relevant information of the article: time, places, actors involved and the other details are often found within it.

> Understanding is a complex integrated process of strategic selection, retrieval and application of various information sources in the construction of textual representations and models. Once we have constructed an acceptable model of the situation, we say that a newspaper item has been understood (van Dijk, 1988).

The rest of the text is interpreted by the reader clause by clause, and also verifying the causal relations between them, to define local coherence. Propositions are ordered through the usual top-bottom schemata: important propositions come first, while the lower level details are provided later. Moreover these propositions may be related to news schema categories such as Main Event, Context, Background or Verbal Reactions.

Representation

The result of such a process of understanding of news is a text representation in episodic memory, which is the part of long-term memory where people's experiences are stored. These text representations give birth

to situation models, subjective representations of the text situation featuring general categories such as Time, Location, Circumstances, Participants, Actions and Events; for news discourse understanding means most of the times the retrieval of such models in memory. These mental models merge with pre-existing attitudes and beliefs, thus modifying opinions and ideologies or giving birth to new ones.

Chapter three

3.1   Framing the news

The differences in think tanks' mission are sharper when we observe how major news events are framed. The framing of major news is a critical part of promoting and defending a political view. In an interview, George Lakoff has explained the concept of 'framing' by making clear examples and blaming Democrats for never being ready to 'frame' the events in their own terms:

> "Every word is defined relative to a conceptual framework. If you have something like "revolt," that implies a population that is being ruled unfairly, or assumes it is being ruled unfairly, and that they are throwing off their rulers, which would be considered a good thing. That's a frame. If you then add the word "voter" in front of "revolt," you get a metaphorical meaning saying that the voters are the oppressed people, the governor is the oppressive ruler, that they have ousted him and this is a good thing and all things are good now. All of that comes up when you see a headline like "voter revolt" - something that most people read and never notice. But

these things can be affected by reporters and very often, by the campaign people themselves".[15]

Conservative think tanks, Lakoff goes on, are fully and better prepared to spring into action and frame news according to the conservative world view, in order to exploit the media impact and covertly influence voters opinion for the future, whereas progressive or liberal think tanks are inclined to hold off until data can be collected to permit a more dispassionate and deeply analysis. Thus, they miss the chance to spread its more progressive and less biased word.

Whether think tanks on the left should exploit communication languages more like those on the right is a complex and open question: the situation on the left is quite different. The U.S. conservative movement, in its broadest sense, is more pyramidal and structured for message coordination and delivery than the progressive movement. The challenge, then, is about understanding what works and why. For this reason, left-wing oriented think tanks are asked to develop new working solutions for their own think tanks, while remaining grounded in their core beliefs and values. Progressive or left-of-center think tanks should shift towards something new, although not totally dismissing their starting perspective; or they would better need a fresher and different institution inside the think tank itself, able to exploit think tanks original intellectual output and, at the same time, to fully implement hidden features and capabilities, also

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[15] Interview to John Lakoff, UC Berkeley News, 27 Oct. 2003,
http://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2003/10/27_lakoff.shtml

concerning the necessary use of new technologies and languages that our modern era requires (see Lakoff 2004).[16]

Over the last decade, progressive or liberal think tanks have begun to clarify and assert more strongly their core ideas, such as the predominant role of government to stimulate the economy, the undertaking role of government to regulate the market to prevent abuses and instability, and to encourage the kinds of economic activity (e.g. small and local business, clean energy) for a better future for everyone, not only for the better offs. Progressive think tanks also seem to have been better understood the predominance of communication and language, since no idea can spread around without a proper communication strategy.

The conservative movement has achieved the most stunning ideological and material victories over the past 30 years thanks to wise exploitation of communication tools and "because they've put billions of dollars into it. Over the last 30 years their [conservative] think tanks have made a heavy investment in ideas and in language" (interview to G. Lakoff 2003). As stated before in this work, then, the proper use of any communicative tool and language is regarded to be as the most relevant feature for any successful political campaign.

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[16] Lakoff founded in 1997 a progressive think tank, the Rockridge Institute. According to George lakoff, its purpose was to study how issues are framed, both conceptually and linguistically, in political discourse, and how progressives might frame them more accurately and effectively. It was closed ten years later, in 2008, apparently for lack of funds (http://www.rockridgeinstitute.org).

3.2 Think tanks and media influence

Some studies show that media extensively use the writings and spokespersons of think tanks, especially conservative, to frame their news. FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting)[17], a liberal watch group, regularly reports on how media use think tanks in their presentation of news. According to Haas (2004), Michael Dolny, in his annual reports for FAIR (1996-1998, 2000-2002), searched Nexis[18], an extensive database of newspaper, television and radio news pieces, to count think tank citations in the media by ideology: a) conservative/libertarian, b) centrist, or c) left/progressive. Dolny reported that in 1995, the news media cited think tanks over 15,000 times. By 2001, the number of citations had increased to almost 26,000. Each year, conservative/libertarian think tanks were cited most often and from two to five times as often as progressive/liberal think tanks.

Moreover, by examining network television news programs, Soley (1992) and Steele (1995) found that some of the so-called 'expert' commentators were often spokespersons from conservative think tanks. Actually, Soley's investigation (1992) on the analysts selected by network television news organizations over two six-week periods (1979-80 and

1987-88) shows that the vast majority of these 'experts' were East Coast, white males, former public officials or associated with conservative think tanks. During the Persian Gulf War news coverage, Steele (1995) found that think tanks, often conservative, accounted for the largest group of media experts, accounting for almost 30% of the total.

Only few researchers have so far described the extent to which think tanks have been used by media in their coverage. Spring (2002) is one of them, writing about conservative think tanks and the "…frequent appearance of their [Manhattan Institute] experts' names in newspaper stories" (Spring 2002: 32), noticing also how, with the strong support of conservative think tanks, Chester Finn (Hudson Institute) and Diane Ravitch (Manhattan Institute) have… "flooded the market with neoconservative opinions about education,"… publishing literally hundreds of articles in the professional and popular press as well as books (Spring 2002: 48).

Education, indeed, is an issue of paramount importance for conservative think tanks, especially the Heritage Foundation. In an AERA (American Education Research Association) [19] presentation, Alex Molnar, directing the "progressive/liberal" Education Policy Studies Laboratory at Arizona State University, examined in 2001 both the extent and presentation of the news coverage of the conservative Manhattan Institute's evaluation of the Florida A-Plus education program by Jay Greene (2001). What is

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[19] www.aera.net

remarkable is that, differently from other similar occurrences, The Manhattan Institute report was not subject to peer review.

Besides, Molnar (2001) found that news media, including *USA Today* and *The New York Times* would pick up the Manhattan Institute nationally distributed press release, habitually mentioning it in 30 news stories and commentaries. Of these pieces, apparently 17 were printed without any control on the quality of the findings, 10 were printed with rather balanced comments on the study's findings, and only 3 consisted of comments or arguments questioning the study. On the contrary, the follow-up critiques of the Manhattan Institute report, published in the education journal, *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, were not covered in the mainstream press, but only once in *Education Week*.[20] Actually, the lack of critical reporting is disturbing and Molnar commented that…. "the distribution of [think tank] policy reports not subject to a peer review process carries with it a risk that sound [education] policy may be subverted" (Molnar 2001: "Introduction").

The conclusions that we can draw from this example are that news media use conservative think tank writings and materials on education quite readily. Molnar's findings also underlines how news media most often depict a conservative think tank's portrait overstating their academic

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[20] Criticism came from two independent follow-up reports by Camilli and Bulkley (2001) and Kupermintz (2001).

expertise, and understating, instead, their political leanings and motives, clearly bending the language to an ideological scope.

3.3   How media present think tank reports and spokespersons

Following Haas (2004), the 1997 FAIR report on the language of news media related to think tanks also examined how the top four think tanks—Brookings Institute (centrist), Heritage Foundation (conservative), American Enterprise Institute (conservative), and Cato Institute (conservative/libertarian)—were identified in the press. Since none of these top four were liberal/progressive, Dolny (1997) also examined the top most cited liberal/progressive think tank, the Economic Policy Institute (EPI). He realized that Brookings and the other three mentioned conservative think tanks did not receive any descriptive ideological label. The Economic Policy Institute, on the other hand, was regularly identified by its political orientation.

At the same time, when funding sources were given, focusing in this way the attention of the citizens on ideological orientation, the liberal/progressive Economic Policy Institute was most clearly identified and labeled, than Brookings and the three conservative think tanks. Dolny (1998) concluded that the news media not only use liberal think tanks less

often than conservative ones, but also that they present them in a different way.

Actually, the Economic Policy Institute was the only group scrutinized in terms of its funding sources, suggesting that "…even when progressive think tanks are allowed to take part in the usually center-right debate, the playing field is still not level." (Haas 2004).

Another example comes from the reporter Trudy Lieberman, in a study of four right-wing policy campaigns entitled *Slanting the Story* (2000). She also concluded that the news media uncritically used and generously presented the work of conservative think tanks. Cato Institute's Policy Analysis n. 187, to make another example, presented as research, was not even remotely close to social science research; rather, Policy Analysis n. 187, entitled "Caveat Emptor: The Head Start Scam", used a "rhetorical style of unbridled scorn" (Lieberman 2000: 102) backed mostly by news reports and misrepresenting the words of Head Start supporters and turning them into criticisms. [21]

In addition, Lieberman notes that despite n. 187's author, John Hood, was not qualified to evaluate Head Start (he was research director for the John Locke Foundation, a conservative state-policy think tank in North Carolina that worked mostly on state fiscal matters), nevertheless, he received extensive, supportive coverage in the news media by being

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[21] The Head Start Program is a program of the United States Department of Health and Human Services that provides comprehensive early childhood education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement services to low-income children and their families. It was launched in 1965.

broadly depicted either in the news media, or through numerous hard news and syndicated opinion columns in newspapers across the country, as a "researcher," an "expert," and "academic" (Lieberman 2000: 108-110). Further, the Cato Institute itself was presented as either having "expertise" in child development or with such descriptors like "Washington-based research organization", from which readers could not discern Cato's ideological orientation.

3.4   Heritage Foundation, a massive media coverage

The study published by Eric Haas (University of Connecticut, Neag School of Education) in 2004 entitled "The news media and the Heritage Foundation: Promoting education advocacy at the expense of authority" helps us to practically demonstrate what has been suggested so far about media utilization to create a favorable environment to the pursuing of a particular goal, by examining the news media coverage of the Heritage Foundation's education-related documents and spokespersons during 2001.

Thanks to a search from the Nexis database at www.nexis.com for the period January 1 – December 31, 2001, for news entries that concerned education and included references to the Heritage Foundation (coinciding with the beginning of the presidential term of George W. Bush), it was noticed that one hundred fifty-nine relevant entries were found. These

entries correspond to every media citation to the Heritage Foundation as a source on education.

A thematic analysis was conducted by coding the relevant entries and over 150 different codes were used, including types of news media (e.g., general news newspapers, education publications, television news etc.), specific news outlets (e.g., *New York Times*, *Business Week, Fox News Live*), topic (e.g., curriculum and school governance, school choice, Heritage Foundation activities), and Heritage Foundation source (e.g., names of specific personnel, publications) . In addition, the Heritage Foundation website (www.heritage.org) was searched for information on the foundation's media practices, publications, personnel and organizational structure.

During 2001, the Heritage Foundation flooded the United States with its views on education. As shown in the table below, the Heritage Foundation was cited by 81 media sources in 159 news items. It was cited in the print, television, and radio media on a variety of education topics in both general news and opinion formats and was present in the media debate on education on average more than once every three days.

News Item		Media Sources	
General news	75	General news newspapers	39
Op-ed	71	Television programs	13
Personnel	11	Policy publications	9
Event calendar	2	News wire services	7
		Business publications	6
		Radio programs	4
		Education publications	3
Total	*159*	*Total*	*81*

Table n. 3 - Heritage Foundation Media Presence Related to Education, 2001 (from Haas 2004).

Haas (2004) found also that the Heritage Foundation personnel were granted 15 opinion bylines and were television or radio guests on 17 occasions. Of the 15 bylines, eight were in the *Washington Times*, while the remaining seven bylines occurred once each in seven different newspapers.

In its citations, the Heritage Foundation presented its views on eight general topics encompassing 42 subtopics. The topics included such commonly debated issues as school choice , testing and education spending, as well as issues on private-public partnerships in school construction. Almost half of the citations were in editorial and opinion formats.

3.5   Opinions, syndicated columns and experts without expertise

Another example of the Heritage Foundation strategy is the Heritage Foundation opinion piece entitled "Look Who's Supporting School Choice

Now", by Jennifer Garrett[22]. According to Haas (2004), Jennifer Garrett argued that "…many members of Congress were hypocrites on vouchers because they were sending their own children to private schools while opposing voucher legislation and thus denying many parents this same opportunity."

Garrett's opinion piece was distributed nationally by: Scripps-Howard News Wire, April 26, 2001, as "Hypocrisy on Vouchers." Over the next two weeks, the article appeared as :

- "Hypocrisy on School Choice", *The Deseret News* (Salt Lake City, UT) on April 27th;
- "Hypocrisy Rife on School Choice", *The Chattanooga Times/Free Press* on April 29th;
- "Hypocrisy on School Vouchers", *The Washington Times*, May 8th.

In addition it was cited, on May 27th, in a *Washington Times* opinion column entitled "Children yes, Unions no."

In three of the articles, Jennifer Garrett was described as "a domestic policy researcher for the Heritage Foundation" and one article did not tell who she was. The Heritage Foundation was only listed as the "Heritage Foundation," without any details on its political characterization.

Haas (2004) mentions other examples in which Heritage Foundation spokespersons' citations were used to support the opinions expressed in

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[22] http://www.heritage.org/research/commentary/2001/04/look-whos-supporting-school-choice-now

two syndicated columns. In April 2001, syndicated columnists Michael Kelly and Cal Thomas wrote about the problems of U.S. public schools and claimed that the recently released National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores demonstrated that federal education programs were generally a failure, that hurt, not helped, the poor. They quoted the Heritage Foundation's Krista Kafer and Stuart Butler to support their theory. Although , unfairly enough, both Krista Kafer and Stuart Bulter were named only mentioning their membership to the Heritage Foundation, but their respective competence on the subject was not included.

Despite their impact on a huge amount of population, now convinced that part of the program of Clinton administration on education was a total failure, these articles provided virtually no information for the reader to discern the quality of these statements or the expertise of these opinion makers. It is really remarkable, though, the fact that a reader would never know from the descriptions of Jennifer Garrett, Krista Kafer, and Stuart Bulter that none of them has ever studied or worked in education. This aspect of the news media presentation of Heritage Foundation sources—a case of 'bias by omission' (Baker 1994) —must be underlined to better understand the relationship between think tanks and media and language manipulative phenomena (see Herman – Chomsky 1998).

Therefore, it come as no surprise that, thanks to Heritage Foundation generous media characterizations of their expertise, the always mentioned Krista Kafer - the Heritage Foundation's most cited source on education-, presented a) on the Heritage Foundation web page as an "expert on

education" and a "senior policy analyst, education" with "expertise [in] school choice, education standards and testing, charter schools, [and] federal education programs and b) in news media, during 2001, in the same terms, as an "education analyst", a "policy analyst" or "of the Heritage Foundation", without explaining the derivation of this title or her qualifications.

Reviewing the staff biographies on the Heritage Foundation website, it appears that their so called "experts in education" - Krista Kafer, Stuart Butler, Robert Moffitt, Michael Franc, and Kirk Johnson have never studied or worked in education. One "expert in education," Thomas Hinton, has a B.A. in political science and Christian education and no work experience in education. Megan Farnsworth, probably, was the Heritage Foundation's most qualified "expert in education." According to her Heritage Foundation biography, she worked as a teacher, curriculum specialist and school evaluator, and she held a master's degree in education from UCLA and an unspecified degree from Harvard's Graduate School of Education.

3.5.1 Research and scientific legitimacy

During 2001, the media presented Heritage Foundation publications as an example of sound social science research conducted by qualified experts. Among Heritage Foundation publications mentioned by the news media, at least ten of these were called "Backgrounders." Obviously, the Heritage Foundation website was far from rendering a full description of what the Heritage Foundation intends a "Backgrounder" to be. Ricci describes them as …: "essays, thoroughly researched and fully footnoted, [that] were usually written in six to eight weeks but could be produced if necessary within days" (Ricci 1993: 161). On the other hand, the Heritage Foundation describes a "Backgrounder" as a… "general recommendation" publication, whereas the media, in contrast, described a "Backgrounder" as a "report" or "study", so implying them to be more scientific and "objective" than either "essay" or "general recommendation."

Therefore, Haas (2004) concludes that, referring to the period of 2001, the Heritage Foundation was cited:

1. regularly and often;
2. in print, television and radio news sources across the country
3. through Krista Kafer, who was presented as an education expert without disclosing her lack of expertise; …
4. almost without criticism.

<div align="right">(Haas 2004)</div>

This resulted in a news image, created by manipulating or somehow 'bending' media language, that enhanced the Heritage Foundation's presentation of itself as a think tank always producing 'objective' and 'scientific' research.

3.6 The war of ideas

Indeed, the Heritage Foundation was created to promote conservative values and ideas. In fact, by spinning marketing strategies and language over sound research policy, it has aggressively promoted publications and "experts" with quite little expertise to policy makers and the news media.

As it appears from the evidence collected by Haas (2004), both news media and internet tools, at least in the area of education, uncritically used and presented the Heritage Foundation's work more than once every three days. Moreover, by referring to their work, words such as "study" and "analyst" appeared in almost every quotation, although, as we already said before, the Heritage Foundation has been described as a driving force in a conservative movement, lacking of public policy expertise and characterized by poor social science research methods.

Haas argues that media used the Heritage Foundation papers during 2001 because they were a free and convenient source of media-friendly resources, having a format usually cut out purposely to meet the requirements of the news media and a language suitable to emphasize marketing over subject knowledge. However, this is not to say that the news media were not or should not have been aware of the Heritage Foundation's objectives and lack of expertise concerning education. In fact, for more than 15 years, it has been widely known that the Heritage Foundation, among the others, has been a marketer of conservative ideas and that some of its experts and research publications are rather suspect.

Thus, it appears well-known that Heritage Foundation spokespersons are not experts in their subject areas. The quote from Soley (1992) strikes the concept once more :

Among [Washington, DC] beltway think tanks, Heritage [Foundation] associates have the weakest scholarly credentials . . . Of its 34 permanent 'fellows, scholars, and staff' members, only 7 have Ph.D.'s. None are renowned scholars in their fields. (Soley 1992: 60).

It is well-known, anyway, that the Heritage Foundation is mainly a conservative advocacy organization (see Weaver - McGann 2000). Its mission is a "war of ideas", no matter what, as affirmed in 2000 by Edwin

Fuelner, former president of the Heritage Foundation, at the beginning of the second Bush administration:

"conservative opportunity and liberal opposition are about to collide like warm and cold fronts on a summer's day, and the probability of thunderstorms is 100 percent. This will be a take-no-prisoners war, and there are going to be winners and losers. Make no mistake about that." (Feulner 2000 in Berkowitz 2002).

In this 'war' of public policy, expertise in promotion and fundraising, the Heritage Foundation operates in the most aggressive way through its unlimited use of the media and new language.

Davis and Owen (1998) provide the strongest condemnation of the media use of think tanks in news coverage. They contend that:… "segments of the news media—the new media outlets—consciously manipulate the news by selecting bits of pre-packaged news disseminated by advocacy groups like conservative think tanks that they can use to create news-like populist entertainment" (Davis and Owen 1998: 42). The new media outlets exploit conservative think tanks for their populist entertainment, because they provide free, ready-to-use, and engaging material on social and political issues.

3.7　Explaining the think tank - media relationship

Given some based-upon –facts- explanations for the use of right wing think tanks as sources of information — conservative journalist predisposition, corporate media economic interests, and journalistic culture favoring conflict and balance — the predominance of right or left think tanks opinion in media world must be attributed to their different approach towards the utilization of communication tools.

According to Allan (2000), "journalists are not propagandists" who intentionally misrepresent the news; rather "it is the culture of routine, day-to-day interactions within specific news institutions" (Allan 2000: 60-61). Therefore, conservative think tanks seem to have that 'new' expertise desired by the current news culture.

As Steele (1995) demonstrated by interviewing a number of prominent television news producers, their expert selection resulted from some criteria completely different from scholarly or ordinary standards. One criterion is "operational bias," namely the capability of an expert to make ….predictions, and comment on players, and policies", and whether they" look good on TV and videos". These characteristics included also whether the expert had…."already been quoted in the *New York Times* or *Washington Post*", and whether the expert has… real world experience as opposed to book knowledge". Another criterion is convenience, namely, the "proximity of an expert to a network studio". Conservative think tanks,

with their emphasis on marketing ideas through any kind of media campaigns, can take full advantage of this new expertise (see Steele 1995: 803-809, in Haas 2004).

Nowadays, new media outlets are talk radio and television, electronic town meetings, television news magazines, MTV, print and electronic tabloids, and computer networks, including the Internet, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and any other type of net community and blog or forum which has became the main channel of human communication. It must by now be admitted that, at different levels, media trigger social "consensus", mainly related to the growing relevance assumed by mass media in our Western societies. Political power is intimately related to the use of mass media, exploited as a form of power control on the one hand, and legitimacy on the other.

Indeed, media do seem to influence citizens' dynamic behavior. We are already observing the effects of different forms of e-government processes in different organizations, even Public Administration. The emergence of new technologies and e-democracy marks an important step in the evolution of our political life. Examples of political e-campaigns represented the first approaches to a new form of communication between citizens and politics. The sites created by parties allow us to understand their relevance to the campaigns. Today, in few seconds, you can mobilize the entire network of your friends on Facebook, and in half an hour you can record a video, upload it to YouTube and show it to thousands people.

The Obama campaign, for instance, has showed this possibility. He did not ask users to be passive, but he accepted and valued their contributions. Conservative think tanks and organizations were the quickest to understand that these "new media outlets" , although much more dynamic and easy to steer, have small staffs and little research support, and therefore necessarily have to rely on external interest groups to meet information needs.

Ricci (1993) states that think tank research is likely to be more helpful to public policy construction than academic research. Singling out the Heritage Foundation, Ricci writes:

think-tankers contribute to the great conversation because both professionally and politically, they tend to take principles seriously. . . Commitment can make a positive contribution to the great conversation, for it can encourage fellows to restate the conclusions in publication after publication, as the Heritage Foundation and the Institute for Policy Studies certainly do. Academic scholars, who may also study policy issues, are driven by a pursuit of scientific novelty, which does not permit them to repeat their findings again and again, as if they had nothing "new" to say. Yet in the larger scheme of things, where political decisions must be worked out in an open marketplace of ideas, such repetition can be crucial for inspiring and fortifying public opinion (Ricci 1993: 225).

The results of her study and of other scholars, such as Davis and Owens (1998), suggested that it is likely that news media's use and presentation of

conservative think tanks (both the new media outlets as well as network television news, radio news, newspapers and internet as a whole) now act in a manner that goes beyond the criticisms, with reckless disregard for readily available information, misrepresenting the conservative think tanks that they include in their news reports.

Haas (2004) believes that what appears most evident is that the news media's use of balanced "he said, she said" reporting as a means to achieve the professional standard of objective journalism plays into the hands of advocacy think tanks like the Heritage Foundation.

Judis (2000) states that there is a direct link between the rise of conservative think tanks and the news media's defensive use of balanced reporting:

> The new think tanks and policy groups created by conservatives and their business allies began to overshadow their rivals. The press, on the defensive itself, began treating the products of the AEI [American Enterprise Institute], Heritage [Foundation], and the American Center [for the Study of Business] with the same respect as those of Brookings [Institute], NBER [National Bureau of Economic Research], or a university economics department. They accepted the canard that different views simply reflected different ideologies and that to be fair, both left and right, liberal and conservative, had to be represented. Once this concession was made, the conservatives triumphed, because in the late 1970s and 1980s they had for more money than their rivals with which to broadcast, publish, and promote their opinions (Judis 2000: 172).

According to Parenti (1993, 1996), news objectivity is a dangerous myth. Parenti (1993) finds that, taking "he said, she said" reporting and journalistic objectivity together, news media's use of balance is inconsistent and instead promotes social inequality, by favoring members of the corporate business class, like the Heritage Foundation:

If reporters play "dumb and more innocent" than they are, it is in selective ways. They may obligingly report whatever politico-economic elites pronounce, be it truth, half-truths, or lies, but they instantly resuscitate their critical faculties when dealing with dissenters. (Parenti 1993: 54)

Parenti argues that the news media must neither accept biases and distortions as inevitable nor strive for unrealistic objectivity. Instead, they should pursue a type of investigative reporting that give "exposure to a wide range of dissident critics along with the usual establishment commentators" (Parenti 1993: 54).

3.8. Bias and language

News media seemingly use conservative think tanks works and spokespersons despite questions about their rigor and expertise because it is more profitable to do so. It also appears that the news media unintentionally present conservative think tank works and spokesperson in a generous manner by omission of their clear political leanings and their emphasis on advocacy, as well as by accepting scientific descriptions without verifying whether this is accurate or not. For the sake of the truth, it must be remembered once more that also liberals are not free from bias and language "twisted" utilization of any kind.

Therefore, the most skilled into utilizing new media options is headed to the victory, despite its possible partial lack of authoritative and academic ground-based research. We need to emphasize the choice of the new forms used to convey new contents, new ideas and programs: think tanks (especially conservative) have been the first to take over.

The Obama campaign was the most recent examples of a way of exploiting these new forms of communication, even enabling supporters to communicate with each other. It was presented not as an electoral campaign, but as a movement, whose center was the voter, who made it possible by voting the new American miracle. Politics spoke the language

spoken by everybody and managed to do it by using social networks and the web, making democratic participation approachable by everyone.

The technology platform allowed the individual volunteer to be the protagonist, to act proactively on the territory. And still Obama has to confront with the transformation of his supporters and has to come to terms with the deep influence of think tanks on his politics. The difference here is that many of the most influential liberal groups are new or relatively young. These young groups include Business Forward, which attempts to attract corporate support for Obama's economic policies; Unity '09, a coalition of progressive groups focused on pushing Obama's policy agenda; and Organizing for America. There are young left-leaning groups devoted to health care (Health Care for America Now), economics (the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities), defense (the Center for a New American Security) and labor issues (Change to Win). Another group, Common Purpose, holds seminars near the White House, bringing together more than 100 liberal activists with Obama administration aides to debate policy and plot strategy.

Matt Bennett, public affairs director for Third Way, a center-left think tank, said the groups amount to "a new intellectual infrastructure" for progressives in Washington. The 'father' of the new vanguard is the Center for American Progress, a think tank founded with three employees in 2003 by longtime Democratic adviser John D. Podesta, who served as President Bill Clinton's chief of staff and ran Obama's transition office. Now with 180 employees and a $25 million annual budget, CAP has its own lobbying

arm, called the Center for American Progress Action Fund; a student-focused project called Campus Progress; and a political blog called Think Progress.

The ability or inability of political groups to control technology and to manage the new language related to it, and especially critical technologies in the strategic profile, in each historical period, particularly affects their fate. The political sphere today is composed by large parties of the Centre-Right or Centre-Left that have received the consent of the majority of the electorate.

In this scenario, communication and election campaigns play an important role, dictated by the fact that voters are more members on the basis of targeted communication strategies, instead of on the basis of political programs. The paradigm of professionalization of politics, which sees the prevalence of specialized skills and organizational centralization and, as with business communication, even political communication tends to be managed within headquarters from which all strategic decisions are taken (see Palumbieri 2011).

These decisions are the result of the numerous and various skills. The new political communication professionals and think tank members and experts can be identified with journalists, advertising and Internet consultants, to whom is entrusted the task of "selling" political messages and even more political figures as if they were consumer goods; all this reinforced by a certain type of journalism, more interested in the "game" of

politics than to the substantive issues. And this is the setting defined by the so-called "permanent campaign", which seems

> the political ideology of our age. This combines image creation to strategic thinking. In the permanent campaign the rule turns itself in a perpetual electoral campaign and converts the government into an instrument of support to the popularity of the elect (Blumenthal 1980: 32).

The decline of parties and the emergence of new figures, as political consultants - to use techniques and technologies more sophisticated than ever before - are identified, by Blumenthal, as the two necessary conditions in order to start and pursue a permanent campaign. More interesting job to do for think tanks. Actually, candidates and parties are permanently oriented to building their own image that they want to convey to the media, with a lot of tension at the next election, rather than challenge the rivals with the construction of a successful policy, or even implementation of programs proposed during the campaign.

We can now distinguish between the concepts of 'campaigning' and 'governing'. The campaign focuses on making individual decisions related to the final outcome, winning the election; while the rule is related to a lasting and constant process. Moreover, campaigning is based on the contrast with the opponent, while governing is collaborative; and finally, "to make campaign" is a process closely related to persuasion, while the rule is related to the resolution arising from the consultation (see Blumenthal 1980).

With the permanent campaign, the governing and campaigning tend to get confused, and it is usually common the trend to use, in the governance, the tools of the campaign as communications strategies to support and 'advertise' the actions of government, to lay the groundwork for a future re-election.

According to this view, parties are dominated by a top-down approach that allows the elite to free itself from the grassroots activists and talk directly to their constituencies, spreading political messages through common channels of communication. The vision that is emerging is composed of political and media elites who, applying to each other, they leave out the mass of voters which is forced to build a political opinion only on the basis of their messages that are passed through the media.

Chapter four

4.1 Think tanks' discourse practices

This final chapter aims to identify and evaluate think tanks' strategies to have an impact on policy and government action in the United States through their more frequent communication practices. The change and the development of political communication will focus, in particular, on:

a) kinds of communication and hybridization / evolution of genres

b) the impact of new technologies

c) the relationship between the features of discourse, its objectives and the role or function of recipients (members of parliament, party organs, printing, general public, etc..)

Some of the most common mechanisms of communication are:

• policy papers

• op-eds

- reports

- monographs

- policy briefs

- parliamentary papers

- seminars and conferences

- workshops and training

- blueprints

- journals

- instant expertise

We will analyse nine texts (between 784 and 5,755 words) written by Heritage experts from 2005 (the year in which the first version of the European Constitution was rejected in France and the Netherlands) to 2007 (the year in which the Treaty of Lisbon was signed) and catalogued on the Heritage website as 'research papers'. These papers belong to different genres of think-tank communication practices (webmemo, commentary, lecture and backgrounder), but basically share the same topics and assumptions: the 'foolish' attempt to build a European nation–state and its potential devastating effects on US geopolitical interests.

The analysis will attempt to demonstrate:

a) how the neoconservative experts working for The Heritage Foundation ideologically frame the prospective European political integration constantly in relation to US geopolitical interests and not in itself;

b) that this type of framing leads the Heritage experts to strategically deny European political identity and overemphasize the identities of the single European countries;

c) how the focus on global and local issues is exploited by The Heritage Foundation to support an argumentative logic aiming to maintain the transatlantic power relations according to the status quo established after the Iraqi war in 2003 (Hassner/ Vaïsse 2003).

List of selected articles

1. 'The Bush Administration Should Not Back the European Constitution' (February 16, 2005) – genre: webmemo (word number: 1080);

2. 'European Disunion'[23] (June 8, 2005) – genre: commentary (word number: 780);

3. 'Cataclysm: The Rejection of the European Constitution and What It Means for Transatlantic Relations' (June 8, 2005) - genre: backgrounder (word number: 4,385);

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[23] This article appeared first in June 2005 in *The Washington Times* with the heading 'Finding European identity – Politics unites, culture divides'.

4. 'The Great EU Inquisition: Europe's Response to the U.S. Rendition Policy' (February 6, 2006) – genre: webmemo (word number: 1,960);

5. 'The EU Constitution: Will Europe Force a Way Forward?' (December 14, 2006) – genre: backgrounder (word number: 3,500);

6. 'Is the E.U. America's Friend or Foe?' (December 22, 2006)[24] – genre: lecture (word number: 4,470);

7. 'Sarkozy's Victory and the Future of U.S.–French Relations' (May 9, 2007) – genre: webmemo (word number: 1,255);

8. 'The New EU Reform Treaty: A Threat to the Special Relationship' (July 6, 2007) – genre: webmemo (word number: 1,085);

9. 'The European Security and Defense Policy: A Challenge to the Transatlantic Security Alliance' (July 18, 2007) – genre: backgrounder (word number: 5,500).[25]

Although the selected articles have a different structure, webmemos and backgrounders make up the major part of this small corpus and share the common purpose of informing researchers and visitors about neo-conservative political visions, attitudes and initiatives.[26]

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[24] This lecture is far from being an academic reflection. It was delivered by John Blundell, Director of the London-based Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), one of the first and most influential conservative think-tanks in Europe. The lecture summarizes a longer document presented by John Blundell and Gerald Frost almost three years before at the *8th IEA Discussion Paper* (January 26, 2004) with a very similar title: 'Friend or Foe – What Americans Should Know About the European Union'.

[25] From now on, all the Heritage papers will be referred to by their relative number between square brackets, e.g.: [1], [2]. Emphasis will be added in italics.

[26] According to the Heritage experts, *backgrounders* "give researchers the in-depth information they need on a wide variety of key issues. Charts, graphs, and other visuals contained in these studies are also available to clarify the nuances of today's public policy debates", whereas a *webmemo* "is an online exclusive analysis that supplies Heritage.org visitors with the information they need to follow fast-breaking policy developments" (see <www.heritage.org>).

Backgrounder

Published by The Heritage Foundation

No. 1862
June 20, 2005

Cataclysm: The Rejection of the European Constitution and What It Means for Transatlantic Relations

John C. Hulsman, Ph.D.

It has already begun. The authors behind the European Union's latest effort at centralization, the EU Constitution, are attempting to ignore the cataclysm of its rejection by voters in the Netherlands and France. In both countries, voters turned out in large numbers, with roughly 70 percent of the French and around 63 percent of the Dutch going to the polls. The results were as overwhelming as they were stunning, with 62 percent of the Dutch and 55 percent of the French voting no.

This decisive rejection of the next step on the road to an ever closer European Union by two of its founding members signals the end of an epoch. Coupled with an almost certain British no vote if the referendum had not been abruptly cancelled, two of the three most important states in Europe oppose the document. As The Economist stated, "[R]ejection of the constitution signals that the dream of deeper political integration and, in the 1957 Treaty of Rome's famous phrase, 'ever closer union' is over."[1] This is to be welcomed by freedom-loving citizens on both sides of the Atlantic.

French and Dutch citizens chose to vote no for many disparate reasons. In addition, a number of overarching pan-European issues and forces contributed decisively to the vote: flaws in the actual document; the economic crisis, which is discrediting the entire European elite; political sclerosis at both the national and European levels, which has left European citizens feeling far removed from democratic control of their lives; and the one-size-fits-all philos-

Talking Points

- The decisive rejection of the next step on the road to an ever closer European Union signals the end of an epoch.

- A number of overarching pan-European forces contributed decisively to the vote: flaws in the document, the ongoing economic crisis, political sclerosis, and the underlying one-size-fits-all philosophy.

- It is vital that the U.S. develop with Europe—collectively and, even more important, as countries—a transatlantic agenda that fits the political realities on the ground.

- Economically, the United States should immediately help to establish a Global Free Trade Alliance.

- Politically, the United States should make it clear that no European country will be penalized for working with the United States on an individual, case-by-case basis.

- Militarily, the U.S. should urge a renewed commitment to NATO reform.

Figure n. 3 – An example of Heritage Foundation backgrounder (document n.3)

4.2.   The Heritage Foundation

The Heritage Foundation was chosen because it is probably the leading think-tank among the many conservative-oriented research centres in the USA. Its deep entrenchment within the Republican Party and governments

from Reagan's two terms onwards[27] is the most apparent reason why we cannot help considering their documents as politically representative of the neo-conservative mindset.

However, a historical and deeper explanation lies in the nature of a think-tank like The Heritage Foundation, which belongs to what Hassner and Vaïsse (2003) call the 'third wave' of political lobbying in the US: the emergence of the *advocacy think-tanks* in the 70s.[28] As we said before, advocacy think-tanks are not simple research centres, because they do not aim to provide academic analyses, but try to implement an ideological program through ready-to-use documents and recommendations. Heritage papers are conceived as an operative tool in the hands of Republican congressmen: reports on relevant legislative issues are delivered to political representatives and their staff in the Congress daily and directly.

It is not by chance that The Heritage Foundation building is only two blocks away from the Capitol Hill. In 1986, Ed Feulner Jr., President of The Heritage Foundation at that time, outlined the project and the role of a new type of think-tank like The Heritage Foundation, more committed to influencing decision-making than producing scholarly papers:

a conservative think tank with the ability to deliver cogent and useful information to key policy makers in a timely fashion. Because they [the men who created HF] were politically involved, they understood that ideas do matter if the ideas are available

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27   The latest speech delivered by the President G.W. Bush at the Heritage Foundation dates back to November 2007 and was focused on foreign policy and war on terror.
28   See Hassner/Vaïsse (2003) for a short historical account of lobbying groups in the USA after the Second World War. See also Abelson (1996) and Smith (1993).

when an issue is being debated, not weeks or months after the debate has ended and the decision has been made. (Feulner 1986)

Ten years after that speech, James Ridgeway (1997), described quite realistically the type of daily exchange of political information taking place between Heritage experts and conservative staff at the Congress:

The foundation has sixty analysts working on issues across the board. Michael Franc, the vice president who oversees government relations, goes back and forth to the Hill three or four times a day, briefing staffs of conservative members and meeting with members themselves. On the Hill, Heritage representatives will hand out backgrounders on a bill heading for the floor the following week. If a bill is in trouble, Franc may go back to headquarters and pull out an apt Op-Ed from *The Wall Street Journal* or produce a quick executive memo. A staffer who knows that his office is going to have to deal with a controversial bill comes to work and finds a short Heritage report on the subject in his in-box. He can quickly find out what's involved and pass it on to his boss to use in a floor statement or in answering letters from constituents (Ridgeway 1997). [29]

Indeed, the Heritage Foundation, according to the intentions of its main founders, William Scaife Mellon, known as the "Financial Father of American Right", and Joseph Coors, a beer magnate, was definitely set up to wage and win what Ed Feulner (1986) called a 'war of ideas' or a 'war of words'. The ideological and linguistic implications behind this approach are obvious: what is at stake is not only an intellectual supremacy or a

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[29] James Ridgeway's article was published in The National Magazine on 22 December 1997 and was entitled "Heritage on the hill. The Right's preeminent PR machine", available from http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Media/Heritage_Hill.html

long-term cultural hegemony, but the ability to provide and support Republican representatives with well-shaped arguments and updated information ready to be used during parliamentary debates.

The instrumental nature of Heritage works proved to be extremely successful during Reagan's first electoral campaign and his consecutive governments from 1980 to 1988. The Heritage competitive approach to politics, where you have winners and losers and you can 'market your ideas' according to a 'marketing strategy' to change the focus of the public debate, influence the public opinion or even shape up the 'end products', i.e. laws, (see Feulner 1986), had a first stunning effect with the publication of the first version of the one thousand page political handbook for conservatives *Mandate for Leadership,* published by the Heritage Foundation in 1980. Especially during his first term, Reagan

> used 'Mandate' to help realize his vision of a world free of communism, an economy that didn't crush people's dreams with high taxes and regulations, and an America the world could admire once again. He gave copies to every member of his Cabinet. The result: Nearly two-thirds of 'Mandate's' 2,000 recommendations were adopted or attempted by the Reagan administration. (Blasko 2004)

4.3 Constructing the enemy

The logical and rhetorical patterns which were so common in conservative papers (see Medhurst *et al.* 1997) during the Cold War time

were exploited again by the Heritage experts dealing with the case of European Constitution. The Heritage Foundation experts were very keen on pointing out the drawbacks to US military interests deriving from European political integration. All the articles selected for the present analysis construct quite a consistent neo-conservative vision of transatlantic relations. The articles seem to have been written by the same author, as they all share some discourse features that we will try to highlight.

The main and common conceptual element is the 'logic of confrontation' (Medhurst *et al.* 1997: 72), which once opposed the USA to the Communist menace and today picks out elsewhere in the world other suitable enemies to go against in the name of freedom and democracy. This basically moral vision of international relations (Hassner/Vaïsse 2003; Lakoff 1995) is based on the constant need to find an external antagonist that represents a challenge to the principles and values of American people. This is the most common approach of conservatives to foreign policy: the opponent can be equivalent to a political group, a person, a state, even a religion that the neo-conservative discourse portrays, de-legitimates and fights.

After 9/11, two well-known moral labels exploited by George W. Bush were 'rogue states' and 'axis of evil' (State of the Union Address 2002), which show how the conservative political and linguistic strategy has been geared to meet the needs of the post-Cold war time. Golub (2003) provides a historical and political explanation of the passage from Cold war to the doctrine of *preemption* (see also Kristol/Kaplan 2003: 79):

Mais, simultanément, la chute de l'URSS faisait disparaître la raison d'être de l'Etat de sécurité nationale, dissolvant le sens que seul procure un ennemi mortel. Comme l'écrivent deux chercheurs nord-américains [Havers-Wexler 2001], "on aurait pu penser que les néoconservateurs se seraient réjouis de la mort de leur ennemi". Ce ne fut pas exactement le cas. Hantés par le spectre de la démobilisation nationale et "préoccupés avant tout par la légitimité politique et culturelle du régime américain", ils recherchèrent un nouveau "démon [...] capable d'unifier et d'inspirer le peuple [...]. Un ennemi à combattre qui rappellerait à ce dernier le sens et la vulnérabilité de sa culture et de sa société" (Golub 2003: 17).

The struggle for ideological hegemony that is shown throughout our Heritage Foundation corpus benefits from a theoretical approach such as Critical Discourse Analysis (hence CDA), which attempts to investigate power relations among political and social forces. Since its beginnings, CDA has pointed out how language choices and ideological stances are intertwined (Hodge/Kress 1979). Van Dijk (2001) pays much attention to describing how ideological systems work through language and its rhetorical devices. His theoretical assumption is based on the concept of ideology as system of beliefs essential for the social construction of a group, rather than simply being an "unstructured list of ideas" (Van Dijk 2001: 13):

Cognitively, as we said before, ideologies are a form of self-schema of (the members of) groups, that is, a representation of themselves as a group, especially also in relation to other groups. Processes of social identification ultimately take place on the shared social representations we call ideologies. The social inspiration for a theory of ideological structure

therefore must be sought in the basic properties of (social) groupness, of which the following ones have particular relevance:

1. Membership devices (gender, ethnicity, appearance, origin, etc.): Who are we?

2. Actions: What do we do?

3. Aims: Why do we do this?

4. Norms and Values: What is good or bad?

5. Position: What is our position in society, and how do we relate to other groups?

6. Resources: What is ours? What do we want to have/keep at all costs?

(Van Dijk 2001: 14)

On these grounds, we can trace a relational network throughout our corpus, in which the identities of three participants emerge:

a) the *opponent*, the European Union – its Constitution and its political class – which is the negative actor, as it actually represents the menace posed to the USA's dominant international role;

b) the *beneficiary*, which in our case is embodied by the European citizens who are represented as against European Union and can therefore be the target of America's action to restore freedom and democracy;

c) the *hero*, the United States, saviour of the oppressed European people, whose task is to face the threat and actively cooperate with single European nation–states through its conservative congressmen.

The main contrast is between the biased identification of *US* and *THEM*, that is to say between the USA, champion and defender of democratic

values, and the Europe emerging from the constitutional process, labelled as an institution working against democratic principles. In all the articles the authors acknowledge a *threat* which the European Constitution poses to US power and the maintenance of geopolitical status quo. The European Union as a military and political single power would subvert this status.

The present analysis will try to single out this basic discursive strategy, without going into more specific and punctual details (passives, nominalizations, syntactic layouts etc.). We will isolate the textual portions which illustrate this strategy and the most apparent semantic and conceptual tokens that fulfil the political objective of maintaining the status quo in terms of the current global power relations, i.e. the political and military subordination of the European Union to the United States.

4.4   European Union, the new threat

The idea of *threat* or *menace* was a leitmotif of Cold War rhetoric. The Reagan administration drew upon a variety of terms that categorized the Communist enemy as a destroying force of a savage nature. They talked about Soviets as if they were "snakes, wolves and other kinds of dangerous predators [...] primitives, brutes, barbarians, mindless machines, criminals, lunatics, fanatics and enemies of God" (Ivie 1997: 74).

The European Union does not deserve the same treatment, but is nonetheless portrayed as a *threat*. The European Union represents a political, rather than a cultural threat. Such image is mainly conveyed

through the use of phrases portraying the European Union as a menacing giant, inevitably acting as an opponent to the USA. The geopolitical situation is seen in a *realist* political perspective, definitely consistent with a neoconservative approach, where the utmost interests concentrate in the US military power and diplomatic relations:

(1) E.U. now has a population *more than 50 percent larger than* that of the United States.[6]

(2) The United States needs to recognize the *threat* posed by Brussels' drive to centralize *huge swathes of public policy* as having significant negative implications for America and respond to that *threat* by applying appropriate diplomatic pressure to ensure that U.S. interests are upheld within the transatlantic alliance.[2]

When explicitly mentioned, the word *threat* is always related to US interests or, sometimes, to *American interests* and *American values.* In these cases, the nationalist pride is more effectively brought into play by using the modifier *American*, rather than *U.S.*:

(3) the increasing political centralization of Europe poses a fundamental *threat* to U.S. interests.[4]

(4) The New EU Reform Treaty: A Threat to the Special Relationship. [8]

(5) Another insidious long-term *threat to American values* is posed by Part II of the draft European constitution, the Charter of Fundamental Rights. [5]

(6) However, the re-emergence of the draft EU constitution represents a *fundamental threat to American interests* far more profound than the hostility of any one European leader. [1]

Some authors implicitly introduce the idea of a threat using expressions which refer to an alleged *plot* against the USA. In such cases, the selected formulations all undermine the well established American pride:

(7) On the other hand, the French have long *coveted* a European defense identity specifically to counter American global power. Through a supranational *foray* into foreign policy areas such as military operations, the ESDP became Chirac's latest *ruse* to rival America. [9]

(8) [European officials] are engaged in a *campaign* of pandering and grandstanding to *delegitimise* U.S. counter-terrorism effort [4]

(9) [the Council's Rapporteur] report it is filled with *conjecture*, *innuendo*, and a barely disguised *sneering contempt* for the U.S. approach to the war on terrorism. [4]

(10)   Finally, the United States should also be *wary* of French President Nicolas Sarkozy's insistence on removing the EU's policy commitment to free and undistorted competition. [8]

However, the idea of an impending danger acquires more strength when the break of the current transatlantic relations is seen in the future and the current threat is likely to become a global power:

(11)   America *would be forced to negotiate with a single European power* instead of forming ad hoc coalitions with sovereign nation-states and traditional allies. [5]

In this view, the USA would then be obliged to deal with a different and more powerful geopolitical player. The geopolitical world order envisaged by Kristol and Kaplan (2003), unilaterally protected by an American superpower, could actually be threatened by the emergence of a *great* Europe.

4.5   The denied identity of the United Europe

The discourse strategy used to exorcise the European enemy is, in the first place, the denial of the *other's* emerging identity. The target, therefore, is necessarily an institutional one, since it is the one which is deemed responsible for the attempt of restructuring the current transatlantic relations. This is achieved by the use of three recurrent series of representations:

a) the old and unrepresentative European political class, identified as distant and disregarding people's will;

b) the European Constitution, mainly described through the metaphorical imagery of *death*;

c) the fundamental cultural multiplicity of European nations, pointing out an intrinsic political diversity which is counterbalanced by American unity.

When referring to the political class and the EU Constitution, many authors try to represent it as a political body made up of very few members embedded in a political framework more similar to an aristocratic system than a democratic one. This semantic cluster revolves mainly around the image of the *élite*:

(12) the continental *elite* has […] lost political touch with its people [3]

(13)   unrepresentative political *elites* [6]

(14)   the continent's tired *elite* [3]

(15)   Like the *old Bourbon kings* of France [3]

(16)   For *Europe's elites*, the constitution is anything but dead. [5]

(17)   [The Constitution] enshrines modish and ephemeral values as supreme law for 25 separate nation-states with the intention of fully globalizing its lofty and *elite-driven policies*. [5]

The symbolic flaw is made more concrete by a political distance between the European governing institutions and the citizens. European politicians and institutions are not elected by people:

(18)   Any attempt to force consensus in Europe, which the Constitution would undoubtedly do, would be inherently *undemocratic*, *counter-productive*, and *artificial*. [3]

(19)   the *unelected* European Court of Justice [3]

(20)   *unelected*, and largely unaccountable salariat [6]

(21)   *anti*-democratic removal of sovereignty [6]

If European governing institutions stem from an undemocratic political system, the failure of their ambitious achievement, the Constitution, is metaphorically turned into a thin object:

(22)   *the fragility* of this political project [6]

or, more powerfully, into an object placed onto the vertical axis and falling towards the bottom:[30]

(23)   It [the EU constitution] has *hit the ground with a well-deserved thud* [3]

(24)   the vision of the EU as an international counterweight to the United States fortunately has *foundered* [2]

In other articles, the metaphorical mapping goes even further and connects the rejected Constitution in France and the Netherlands with the anthropomorphic image of a dead body:

(25)   the Constitutional ratification process is *dead* in the water [2]

(26)   Outside of Europe, the EU constitution is widely assumed to be *dead* [5]

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[30]   In these cases, the basic metaphoric concept is mapped onto space dimensions and draws on the opposition *up* is *good* vs. *down* is *bad* (Lakoff/Johnson 1980).

(27)   Europe's powerful Franco-German axis has taken on the mantle of *resuscitating* the constitution. [5]

(28)   the governments of Denmark, Finland, and Luxembourg have all come out in vocal support of *reviving* the draft constitution. [5]

The emphasis on European *dis-union*, however, is also worth being observed. The most striking attack on European identity is made by the use of noun- and verbal phrases indicating *disunion* and absence. The European denied identity is mainly conveyed by reiterating negations or statements underlining political disagreement, cultural differences, diversity, and disparity:

(29)   different languages and cultures [6]

(30)   this problem is compounded by the lack of a common language [6]

(31)   The EU has not even been able to come up with the words to a European anthem, as no one could agree which language the text should be [2]

Along the same line, other statements simply take for granted European cultural variety and multiplicity providing no explanations:

(32)   *Europe is divided*, not united [1]

(33)   there is widespread *disagreement within* Europe [2]

(34)   In a *Europe of diversity*, it would seem that […]. [3]

(35)   The constitution was purposely vague so as to hide significant *differences* of political opinion [3]

(36)   growing technological *disparity* and the unbridgeable *political schisms* within Europe […]. [3]

(37)   economic, sociological, military, and political *diversity* in Europe [3]

(38)   Europe does not have a common people, nor does it have common bonds of allegiance and obligation [6]

(39)   there is, of course, no such thing as a European people or European nation [6]

As we have seen, besides ensuring they are sufficiently clear about the 'death' of the European constitution, a further strategy is to emphasize the European 'disunion'. Here again the aim is twofold. On the one hand,

emphasising the many political and cultural differences confirms even further the non-identity of Europe; on the other hand, the authors implicitly compare a *dis*-united Europe with the *United* States of America.

4.6   The *Europeans*, or the recognized identity

Having identified the 'enemy' and, at the same time, denied its identity, the Heritage experts are ready to recognize some sort of European identity. It seems contradictory to recognize an identity to an entity who has been the target of bitter criticism. However, all the authors of our corpus use similar discourse devices supporting a same argumentative strategy: if the Europe of the institutions is de-legitimised, the actual European citizens come into play as *actors* or, more precisely, as *personas*. In this process, the participants – no longer opponents – are referred to as *the British*, *the Dutch*, *the French, the Scandinavians, Europeans, people, peoples, citizens*:

(40)   Many other EU members – *the Central and East Europeans, the British, the Dutch and the Scandinavians* – do not want their relationship with the United States constantly jeopardized. [2]

(41)   *French and Dutch citizens* chose to vote no for many disparate reasons [3]

(42)   *The Dutch* are generally pro-American [3]

(43)   *the French and Dutch* rejected the proposed text in referenda [3]

(44)   *The French people* seemingly understand that their country faces a stark choice on its future and opted for an openly pro-American reformer. [7]

These participants receive their national identity and, at the same time, share the same values as the Americans, basically rejecting the European Union, its Constitution and its political élite. The use of some of the most frequent labels, which provide Europeans with these national and civic identities, is quantified in Figure n. 2.
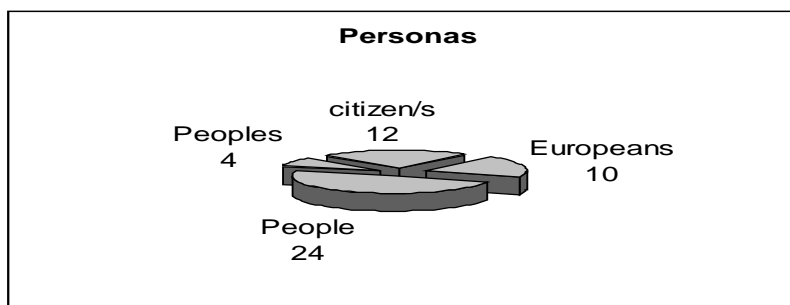

Figure n.2.- Number of occurrences of the words people(s), Europeans, citizen(s).

If we examine the word *Europeans*, we find that it is sometimes associated with a passive role (because oppressed by European leaders):

(45)   the notion of ever closer union is a utopian idea whose time will never come. *All Americans and Europeans* who believe in the transatlantic relationship should be glad for this rude awakening, as it allows things to proceed in a more realistic manner. [3]

(46)   The common denominator in all these instances of systemic failure is that *Europeans feel powerless*, whether the questions are political or economic. [3]

(47)   the ambition to create a unitary European state as a countervailing force to the United States […] continues *to the detriment of the economic and security interests of both North Americans and Europeans*. [6]

This is contrasted with an active role, in which *Europeans* show a sort of willingness which does not match the political project promoted by European institutions. The following examples show the necessity to allow European citizens to have their say, as happened in France and the Netherlands:

(48)   What Europe's leaders should do now, after the cataclysms of the French and Dutch referendums, is to take a deep breath and ask *ordinary Europeans what kind of future they really want*, in positive terms. [2]

(49)   the United States should make it clear both that it respects *the right of Europeans to decide* the ultimate form of political association that the *various states wish to have* with one another. [3]

(50)   The United States should move quickly to support *Europeans* everywhere *who wish to retake control* of their political, military, and economic destiny. [3]

4.7.   Global vs. local

The discoursal practice of denying and recognizing identities has the strategic purpose of maintaining the status quo, neutralizing a single global rival so as to deal with individual states. Most of the examples quoted below describe an action – *work, cooperate, engage* – which positions the main participant, the USA – the *hero* – in an active and operative role. The USA is identified through the influence of its institutions, mainly diplomatic bodies that represent a democracy and so are allowed to carry out political actions on a *global* scale. The addressees of this sort of performative identity are not the European citizens but *member-states*, *nations*, *partners*, *allies*, *countries*. The U.S. act to the benefit of the single European state identities:

(52)   [….] the United States should continue to *work closely* with the governments of *individual European states* [4]

(53)   […] *cooperate effectively with individual European nation-states* [4]

(54)   America must therefore shore up its *bilateral* relations with these [Poland and Czech Republic] countries and *encourage them* to pursue security and defense agendas that are commensurate with the aims of the transatlantic alliance and their own broader strategic interests [9]

(55)   welcomes *working with European countries on an issue-by-issue, case-by-case basis*. [3]

(56)   to *work closely* with its *plentiful allies in Europe* with which it shares common strategic interests [5]

(57)   [*will deal*] with *individual allies* to build ad hoc coalitions [5]

(58)   [….] needs to signal its willingness to *work with multiple partners* on a variety of stages and resist the "speak with one voice" approach [5]

(59)   Friendly relations with *individual EU member states* must be the highest priority for America's vast diplomatic service [5]

(60)   […] a Europe where *national* sovereignty remains paramount regarding foreign and security policy and *where states act flexibly* rather than collectively whenever possible will enable America *to engage the continent* most successfully. [1]

The above examples show how identity is granted to those Europeans who acknowledge the European disunion and the negative consequences of a single oppressing Europe, and consequently claim the right to act individually. By focusing its attention on single states, the USA can establish privileged, *individualised* relationships which will ultimately allow them to maintain the role of unique geopolitical power. Interestingly, this *dìvide et ìmpera* strategy is a clear countermeasure to the alleged plot of the European super-state to subdue the USA. Here, the 'going local' tendency is evident in all the expressions where the second participant is identified by the adjective *individual*. Equally, the encouragement to fragment is stressed by words such as *bilateral*, *flexibly, issue-by-issue, case-by-case*. The political identity of the European Union is *denied* in order to neutralize the danger of a potential global competitor, therefore pictured as the main cause of transatlantic disagreement. On the other hand, single national identities of European citizens and member-states are *recognised* since they are evidently less powerful and dangerous for US supremacy at an international level.

Conclusion

It is not easy to assess the impact of think tanks in the USA: on both sides of the political spectrum, it seems that the main drive behind think tanks' action and initiatives is competition. It is not by chance that one of the most prominent leader of a think tank, Ed Feulner, 'framed' political rivalry and challenge as a war – a *war of ideas*, a *war of words*. U.S think tanks seem to adapt their intellectual efforts to beat the enemy, not to strengthen the democratic debate among social parties.

Mass media still allow the manipulation of consensus. Political ideas are spread and exchanged as if they were products to buy and sell: the evolution of think tanks over the last fifty years (chapter one) proves that the process of *commodification* of public life has been extended to politics too. People can buy products for their households – bread, soap, Coca –cola – as well as ideas. The same advertising and marketing strategies can be exploited, so that politics is able to provide what voters want in that moment, not what is best for them on the long-term.

A neutral notion of ideology, as we sketched in the second chapter, seems to be more appropriate to the purposes of the social researcher. Ideology, seen as a form of self-schema of (the members of) groups, that is

a representation of themselves as a group in relation to other groups (Van Dijk 2001), is a more agile concept than the traditional marxist principle of ideology as false consciousness. The interpretation and understanding of the structure of ideology, rather their validity or 'truth', helps social scientists discover how ideologies work and how they exploit linguistic resources. As a matter of fact, thanks to this theoretical background, we were able to observe and investigate (chapters three and four) what lies behind neo-conservative discourse and their relationship with mass media and how language is, too often, functional to political purposes.

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