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Leadership Narratives as Divergent Framing of Conflict: A Discourse Analysis of Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue

MAJLINDA BREGASI AND THOMAS CHRISTIANSEN¹

Abstract. This chapter focuses on Discourse Analysis as a micro study of political culture and conflict resolution in a specific context (that of relations between Kosovo and Serbia). The concept of political culture is highly complex and multi-layered. Its dynamic nature makes its effect on politics nebulous, especially as a means of resolution of conflict. The focus of this article is on political leader discourses against the background of the dialogue process between Kosovo and Serbia, under the mediation of the European Union. We analyse recent speeches by the political leaders of both countries to see how speaker mentality influences the conflict resolution process. We show how complex hitherto irreconcilable issues are concretely represented and framed in two speeches each by the leaders of Serbia (President Vučić) and Kosovo (Prime Minister Kurti) at two international events, respectively, the 78th session of the UN General Assembly of the United Nations in New York (September 2023), and the Pace Samite Forum, in Paris (November 2023), and attempt to deconstruct their strategies, aims and purposes.

Keywords: Political culture; Discourse Analysis; Kosovo; Serbia

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Introduction

In the range of pathologies associated with state weakness, such as the lack of institutional cohesion, political fragmentation, and the disconnection between state and social actors, Kamrava cites as the most glaring one, the state's status, in particular its diminished standing in the international arena, and its ability proactively to promote or even to defend its interests in dealing with regional and international forces and actors (Kamrava, 2016, p. 8). To examine this issue, we concentrate on two speeches each by the leaders of Serbia and Kosovo at two almost contemporaneous international events, respectively the 78th session of the UN General Assembly in New York (September 2023) and the Pace Samite Forum, in Paris (November 2023).

Kosovo proclaimed its independence from Serbia (of which it was an autonomous province called Kosovo and Metohija) and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (of which Serbia was a constituent state) in 2008 and was immediately recognized by many members of the international community, among which the USA and many members of the EU (most notably, Germany, France, the UK, Italy). However, many key international players still do not recognise it: most notably Russia; China; and, within the EU, four members (most notably Spain and Romania). Its very existence then, though taken for granted in many quarters, mostly among the Kosovari of ethnic Albanian descent, is still hotly contested and denied in others, in particular in Serbia itself and in some areas of Kosovo where the majority of the population is ethnically Serbian. Gaining recognition from all EU members and as much of the wider international community as possible remains the focus of Kosovan diplomacy while the reverse is true of Serbian diplomacy, where the priority is on reversing the events of 2008 and returning "Kosovo and Metohija" to the Serbian fold.

1. *Political Culture*

Since the early 1990s, there has been an effort to introduce the concept of political culture into the emerging theoretical framework of conflict resolution studies. The two classic studies *The Civic Culture* (Almond and Verba, 1963), and *Political Culture and Political Development* (Verba and Pye's, 1965) try to show how democracy can be possible only with the presence of a "political culture consistent with it" (Almond and Verba, 1963, p. 3). The latter widened the political culture approach into a global framework for the comparative analysis of political change and regime legitimacy in developed as well as developing countries (Dalton and Welzel, 2014).

Even though the role of culture in politics is studied from many angles and perspectives, political culture remains a complex, multilayered and often nebulous concept. As Almond (1998) said: "What we learned from *The Civic Culture Revisited* was that political culture is a plastic many dimensioned variables, and that it responds quickly to structural change". Some criticisms have been raised about the difficulty of giving to political culture an effective role with its relational element. Indeed, the ambiguity of how culture affects political structures or how political structures affect culture remains a crucial limitation of the approach (MacQueen, 2009, p. 14). This ambiguity is important in the case under examination because we can see the consequences of particular modes of political participation in certain political structures.

2. *Fragile Politics*

A major priority for Kosovo is dealing with the lack of legitimacy and authority in the northern part of the country where the state struggles to maintain control over its territory and

provide security against external and internal threats. The majority ethnic Serbian population who live in this part of Kosovo rejects the authority of the government of the independent Kosovan state. Since the end of the armed conflict between the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA - or UÇK in Albanian) and the Yugoslavian Army acting on behalf of Serbia (1998-1999), they have continued to live as if they were still in Serbia and to seek protection and direction not from Pristina (or either the EULEX authorities or KFOR) but Belgrade. In Kosovo then, we are dealing with a context of multiple community identities (e.g. Albanian, Serb, Turkish, Romani, Bosnian), where the dominant identity (Albanian) is contested by a minority identity (the many Serbs who remain loyal to Belgrade). In such conditions, the authority of the new state may be weak, and instability is a constant threat, affecting the whole population, whatever their ethnicity. More specifically, where political orientations are contested, for example in this case, the very nature and identity of “Kosovo” – independent state or province of Serbia –, political culture operates as a source of conflict (Kamrava, 1995, p. 692).

In the divided town of Mitrovica, there are two parallel municipalities, two universities, one on the north side of town, for Serbian students, and one, on the south, for Albanian ones. In a few words, there are two rival communities inhabiting the same city. In this circumstance, it is very easy for incidents to ignite spontaneously, or to be fanned deliberately and escalated by organised groups, often armed, whose strategy is to destabilise the community, to spread fear, with the ultimate goal of making long overdue reconciliation impossible, and of thwarting all attempts to bring the decades-old state of conflict to an end.

According to Charles Call, such situations constitute a ‘security’ and ‘legitimacy gap’. A ‘security gap’ is when the state cannot “provide minimum levels of security in the face of or-

ganised armed groups”. [...] A ‘legitimacy gap’, which is the most difficult to conceptualise and operationalize, occurs when a “significant portion of the political elite and society rejects rules regulating the exercise of power and the accumulation and distribution of wealth” (Kamrava, 2016, p. 10).

In such a complex and difficult situation for an independent Kosovo to implement political decisions, especially in the face of a powerful ethnic minority, the state’s power to function properly is diminished. A weak Kosovan state is what the current regime in Serbia wants both for its own political and economic interests, and to show to the international powers who supported Kosovan independence that they were mistaken and have failed. As regards NATO and those of its members who participated actively in the military intervention in Kosovo, which led to the withdrawal of the Yugoslav Army in 1999, and eventually (in 2008) to the establishment of an independent Kosovo, Serbia seeks revenge (or justice) for what it sees as a wanton act of aggression against (or invasion of) a sovereign democratic state.

We will examine how these complex hitherto irreconcilable issues are represented and framed in the speeches of Kosovan Prime Minister Kurti and the Serbian President Vučić, by trying to deconstruct their strategies, aims and purposes.

3. Values and Assumptions

Politics “is about moral values” (Lakoff, 2009, p. 43). Values and assumptions are two conceptualizations that political culture operates with to affect society and to increase its commitment to these same values. Each political leader represents their policies under the premise that they are “right” or “morally justified”.

“Values and assumptions bear particular importance for conflict resolution processes and, specifically, peace agreements as these official texts seek to implement a specific set of mechanisms for future political development” (MacQueen, 2009, 16). Values are seen as preferable political actions in relation to decisions, structures, and institutional organisation. They represent the community’s priorities in a certain historical moment, so they are fluid by nature, because they can change with the times. For this reason, they must be interpreted within their original contexts.

Assumptions relate to particular events, actions, or decisions which are promoted or demoted by a certain political culture. That is, political culture consists of assumptions about the political world where it “defines the range of acceptable alternatives from which groups or individuals may choose a course of action” (MacQueen, 2009, p. 17). In our corpus, we identify these “values” and “assumptions” that shape political processes, including the post conflict reconstruction.

4. Political Truth Production

When people interact, they do not communicate only with respect to social roles, boundaries, and bonds, they also communicate representations of the world. When politicians interact, they are communicating in order to represent the world according to their opinions and values, which they promote, and even impose. The objective of a political discourse is to affect the acceptance of an opinion through argumentation, or to generate acceptance of an opinion without argumentation to reach further conclusions. In the second case, we are dealing with classic propaganda (Baldi, Savoia, 2010). In such a state of affairs, the question is often not

whether the truth is spoken or not, but whether the audience is convinced or not. “There is no doubt that if we are concerned with language and politics, we have to be concerned with truth and falsity in relation to a real world in which human interests and human suffering are real” (Chilton, 2004, p. 49). The aim of political elites is to modify the presentation of reality by producing the political truth and presenting it as the historical truth for the purpose of obtaining authority, legitimacy, and power.

Political discourse is seen as a rhetorical discourse par excellence, because rhetorical structures have communicative functions. “Basically, they can be defined in terms of specific transformations of grammatical structure, such as additions, deletions, permutations, or substitutions, as in the case of alliterations, rhymes, or parallelisms at the morphosyntactic level, and metaphors, irony, or understatements at the semantic level” (van Dijk, 1987, p. 35).

5. Analysing political discourse

Language, as manifested in political discourse, is the raw material of politics, and elites manipulate it to manage a flexible, increasingly fragmented, but highly dynamic and yet fragile society. Leaders gain or lose their power using political language effectively or not, and people become powerless or gain strength, deceived or informed, through these discursive strategies (Corcoran, 1990, p. 54).

In the region of the Balkans, radical changes have occurred in all aspects of life, in politics, economics, social structures, values and even identities. All of the Balkan states emerged from authoritarian regimes, and, in an authoritarian society, changes are mediated significantly through the power

of language, carefully controlled by various sources of authority (Cao and Tang, 1993; Chilton et al. 2012; Bregasi, 2020).

Edelman (1987 [1964], p. 65) says that there is no politics without symbols and rites, nor can there be a political system based solely on rational principles, excluding any symbolic connotation. He further emphasises that the research into discourse analysis should not be based only on lexical analysis, but also on the way in which speakers, who belong to different social contexts, respond to different types of language.

When we look at Vučić's speech, one element that immediately catches the attention of even the ordinary reader is the very name of Kosovo, which is called 'Kosovo and Metohija' by Vučić. Indeed, the very identity, nature and even location of the referent of the expression "Kosovo" is of course the central issue that divides these two leaders. In his speech, that we are analysing further, Vučić refers to the area which Kurti would define as "Kosova" (the Albanian version of 'Kosovo') no less than 37 times. On six occasions, he uses the English version of the official Serbian name "Kosovo and Metohija"; twice "Kosovo, southern Province of the Republic of Serbia"; and, to refer explicitly to the Kosovo of which Kurti is PM, he uses the expression "so-called 'Kosovo'" ten times (note also the use of the quotation marks, which amplify the effect of 'so-called'), thereby signalling his refusal to accept it as a reality. On another six occasions, he avoids the name "Kosovo" altogether, substituting it with "Pristina" as in "Pristina prime minister, Albin Kurti". Significantly, for the remaining 13 times, he uses the neutral, unqualified phrase 'Kosovo'; Kurti, by contrast, consistently uses the phrase 'Kosova'.

We can conclude from this simple analysis of how Vučić refers to this territory that, while for the majority of the time (24/37 or over 66.66%), his refusal to entertain the idea of an independent Kosovo is emphasised and apparently beyond doubt, in 13/37 (or just under

33.33%), his position is more ambiguous, there being no explicit rejection. The pattern here seems to be a discourse style which is overtly dogmatic and intransigent. However, on closer inspection, it displays subtle changes of stance and position which may either be viewed as inconsistencies or, more charitably, as indications of a degree of latent flexibility and pragmatism. It is as if he is playing two roles: the most obvious, his preferred face so to speak, the strident and untiring defender of his cause and principles; and secondly, a hidden face, that of a seasoned politician, quietly open to negotiation and compromise... if the occasion demands.

There also appear to be hidden layers when it comes to reference to individuals in Vučić's speech: whether he uses names or, as would be more normal in diplomatic circles, their titles. When referring to Vladimir Putin, Joe Biden, or Antonio Guterres, he avoids names and uses titles: "President of Russia"; "President of the United States", and "Secretary General" [of the UN], as well as a situationally identifiable "German Minister". He is not consistent in this practice however as he refers to US Secretary of State Blinken by name twice and most markedly he explicitly refers to Albin Kurti on two occasions:

Today, in Kosovo, southern Province of the Republic of Serbia, the blunt violence is taking place, exerted against the Serbs by the separatist authorities of Albin Kurti.

Only last week, after who knows which failed round of the dialogue in Brussels, Pristina prime minister, Albin Kurti, after rejecting the European proposal for de-escalation, addressed the public in front of one of the main buildings of the European Union and in front of the millions of viewers of the media that were present conveyed to not so many remaining Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija that the Serbs will, I quote 'suffer and pay for the mistake they made'.

Using the name, especially in the case of Kurti, constitutes a move away from the objective, diplomatic arena into the per-

sonal one, and is more reminiscent of everyday political discourse where rivals may criticise and accuse each other in a combative manner. That Vučić uses such a discourse here is perhaps indicative both of his desire to minimise the authority of his nemesis, Kurti, and of his feeling of desperation, anger or frustration with, and lack of respect towards, the forum in which he finds himself.

While Vučić is constructing his narratives, where Serbs are victims of an autocratic regime, and its powerful allies Kurti paints the exact opposite picture:

Serbian army has 48 forward operating bases around our border, 20 of them are military, 20 gendarmeries, and it took Jakes Olivan from National Security Council of White House to come out together with Secretary Blinken and say that this amassing of troops around the border of Kosova is unacceptable and they have to withdraw in order to bring us back to rather peaceful situation with decrease tension.

6. *Frames and Metaphors*

Language conveys power, through expressing, communicating and shaping thoughts. According to Lakoff (2009), frames or “scripts” are complex narratives the kind we find in anyone’s life story, as well as in fairy tales, novels, and dramas are made up of smaller narratives with very simple structures. Chilton (2004) considers frames as theoretical constructs with some cognitive and neural reality, which are related to the conceptualization of situation types and their expression in language. Fillmore (1985) discovered that words are defined in relation to conceptual frames, as he identified that groups of related words, called “semantic fields,” are defined with respect to the same frame. Language gets its power because it is

defined relative to frames, prototypes, metaphors, narratives, images, and emotions (Lakoff, 2009, p. 15). This theoretical framework is important for our analysis because both political leaders in focus here use cultural prototypes, themes, images and icons to build their contrasting narratives.

7. A Tour D'Horizon of the theoretical framework

The cognitive approach considers political discourse as a product of individual and collective mental processes (Chilton, 2004, p. 51) and, at this level, the concept of metaphor plays a vital part, as it does, throughout any human's conceptual system, which, according to Lakoff (1980, p. 454) is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.

Metaphors are at the bedrock of language. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1987, 1999) they constitute a structured sets of mappings dealing with some of the most fundamental concepts, e.g. argument is war, more is up, love is a journey, theories are buildings, ideas are food, as well as the propensity to envisage time in terms of motion and space (see also Christiansen, 2013).

Kövecses (2010, p. 42) observes that metaphors have two facets; they may be based on knowledge or on images / schema. The former explains how only a small number of source concepts may generate a whole set of associations constituting a complex cognitive mapping. Other types of metaphor that are by their nature vague and rely mainly on images establish isolated links that do not require a whole series of interconnected associations. Both these aspects of metaphors are important to political discourse as they explain how they may at once form the basis of complex and detailed narratives in relatively few words as well as create abstract but powerful

images that leave a deep impression and have great persuasive power. This is because as, Lakoff (2009, p. 38) points out:

Neural binding allows these permanent general narrative structures to be applied to ever new special cases. That's why the same narrative structures keep recurring, from war to war, from celebrity to celebrity, from one political figure to another. [...]

A metaphor that one may use to describe the way that metaphors function cognitively is of a journey in which a traveller moves from one point, the source domain, to another, the target domain (see Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, p. 236-7). Generally, the source domain is concrete and the target domain is more abstract. In this journey, the traveller ideally follows the rational line. There is an obvious link with political discourse here, especially that where parties hold starkly opposed opinions, as is the case here. "If the traveller gets stuck at any point of the journey (the rational argument), he or she will need a companion to help him or her reach the destination – in our case, the political leader would appear to be the best and the only companion available" (Bregasi 2017; Bregasi and Bikaj, 2022). Political discourse is thus conceptualised precisely like a metaphorical move or journey.

8. *Analysing narrative roles*

Each frame has a role (similar to a cast of characters), and there are relations between the roles, and scenarios performed by those playing the roles (Lakoff, 2009, p. 22). This can be seen in the following extract from Vučić's speech

The attempt of cutting my country into pieces, which had formally started in 2008 by the unilateral declaration of inde-

pendence of the so-called Kosovo, has not ended yet. Precisely the violation of the UN Charter in case of Serbia was one of the visible precursors of numerous problems we are all facing today, and that go far beyond the borders of my country and scopes of the region I come from.

The metaphorical construction ‘the attempt of cutting into pieces’ comes after a very curated introduction, where Vučić draws a parallel between ‘great powers’ which make decisions and ‘small Serbia’ which has suffered as a consequence. The attempt of cutting, a spatial-temporal metaphor contextualised in 2008, partially represents reality. The NATO decision to intervene in Serbia was made in 1999, after ethnic cleansing was carried out by the Yugoslav Army and Serbian-backed paramilitary groups in Kosovo. Moving historical facts into another time frame helps Vučić to produce a political truth and represent Serbia as a victim, while avoiding responsibility for the reasons that led NATO to intervene.

Only further in his speech, does Vučić mention the reasons why all 19 NATO countries took the decision to intervene in Kosovo:

Pointless and meaningless explanations like the police terror that Serbian authorities had carried out in its southern Province a decade earlier, humanitarian crisis, expelling of the local Albanian population, were only a drop that spilled over the glass of lies and nonsense, in order to justify the violence against a sovereign country, and in order to undermine its integrity.

But all these reasons for Vučić are only ‘a drop that spilled over the glass of lies and nonsense’. Modifying the reality by denying ethnic cleansing, and the humanitarian crisis, helps Vučić construct his narrative in order to build up the authority and legitimacy of Serbia to reject the recognition of Kosovo, and to influence other countries to do the same.

The language itself that he is using evokes a sense of insecurity and threat, which have a profound and demonstrable effect on anyone exposed to such discourse repeatedly. The reason for this is that the neural circuits have become fixed in the listener's brain. And the speaker creates that fear for political ends. As Lakoff (2009, p. 40) states: "The fact that imagining and acting use much of the same neural structure has enormous political consequences".

9. The role of frames

Frames are complex structures constructed by simple narratives. Simple narratives have the form of frame-based scenarios, but with extra structure. In Kurti's speech we are dealing with a general rescue narrative. It has a number of "semantic roles", that is, main characters, actions, and instruments. The characters are: the Hero, the Victim, the Villain, the Helpers. (Lakoff, 2009, p. 24). Each frame has a role (similar to a cast of characters): relations between the roles, and the scenarios performed by those playing the roles.

In Kurti's speech, these roles are: Victim - the Albanian people, state of Kosovo; Hero - Kurti, Villain- Vučić, Serbian State; Helper - NATO and the EU.

In the discourse of Vučić some of these roles are not clear, even if we could name them as: Hero- Vučić, Victim- Serbian People, Villain- NATO and EU members, Helpers - Russia. Vučić is vague not only about the identity of the "great powers" but he also avoids providing crucial detail about the wrongs that he alleges were committed against his country, in particular in 1999. "We know from cognitive science and neuroscience that such narratives are fixed in the neural circuits of our brains. We know that

they can be activated and function unconsciously, automatically, as a matter of reflex.” (Lakoff, 2009, p. 34).

10. Russia and Ukraine as a reference narrative

As regards Russia, Vučić’s discourse is more straightforward. He refers to it three times, twice of which to underline the historic friendship between it and Serbia (“centuries-long traditional friendship” and “traditional ties”)

The sentence “They didn’t laugh out loud when Russian President used the very same words, justifying his attack against Ukraine” is however notable in that again it refers to the Euro-Americans, but without naming them (using only the anaphor ‘They’), putting them in a contrastive position to Russia. The strategy here seems to be to treat the countries of Europe and the USA in a similar way to the concept of an independent Kosovo outside of Serbia in two different, apparently contradictory ways: on the one hand, a community of nations and organisations that Serbia is happy to be part of, and with which it aspires to integrate more; on the other, as unnamed dark forces that have worked against Serbia’s interests in the past. Again, this could be seen as inconsistency, or as a deliberate strategy, displaying opportunism: a mental agility that allows one to keep all options open in the rapidly changing geopolitical situation of the 2020s.

Vučić:

Nevertheless, worse than anything is that all those who committed aggression against the Republic of Serbia, lecture today about territorial integrity of Ukraine, as if we didn’t support the integrity of Ukraine, and we do support it and we will keep supporting it, because we do not change our politics and we do not change our principles, regardless of centuries-

long traditional friendship with the Russian Federation. To us, every violence is the same, every violation of the UN Charter is the same, regardless of the strength of the power that exerts it or inevitably similar excuses it makes for its illegal and immoral behaviour.

The assertion that “every violence is the same, every violation of the UN Charter is the same” is interesting in that it tacitly concedes that the actions of the Russian Federation, its historic friend and ally, in Ukraine are reprehensible. However, the subtext is that such misdemeanours are justified by the fact that certain (unnamed) great powers (Villains) did the same thing in their invasion (or intervention) in Serbia (Victim) in 1999. The rhetoric is passionate and forceful but the actual point being made is once again couched in layers of ambiguity. The central message is that the great powers (Villains) think they can do whatever they want, ignoring their own transgressions while condemning others (the Helpers) for doing comparable things. What the precise “things” are, and how exactly they are similar - a major point for his argument, one would think - Vučić again fails to elaborate upon. In fact, he dismisses the need for such elaboration by espousing the morally dubious principle that “every violence is the same etc.”; in essence, if A breaks one rule, then B has the right to break the same rule, even in a far more grievous manner, and expect to be treated in the same way. In any case, the argument that a large wrong can be justified by an earlier smaller one can be described either as unfounded or sophistic. It certainly does not reflect the way that legal systems treat such matters, as one of their central tenets is that there are what have been called “gradations of evil”: the rationale behind the concept of *lex talionis* (making the punishment or penalty fit the severity of the crime) as encapsulated millennia ago in the Biblical phrase: “an eye for an eye” (Book of Exodus 21, p. 23-27).

The entire discourse of Vučić is about territorial integrity, using it as a main conceptual metaphor to accuse EU mem-

bers of ‘aggression’ against Serbia making a parallelism with the Ukraine situation. Moving the spatial and temporal context of Kosovo in 1999 to Ukraine in 2022 is an effective strategy to produce the reality that best suits his ends. In this way, Vučić justifies not only Serbia’s politics against Kosovo, but also the fact that Serbia is the only country in the region which did not condemn Russia for its aggression in Ukraine. These kinds of formulations reflect key aspects of the trajectory of politics and indicate the future direction of its development.

On the other hand, Kurti presents a narrative which mirrors that of Vučić but in which the actors are the same, but with inverted roles:

On the other hand, we have to really focus on geopolitical situation where we have no alternative because we don’t want to have other alternative except EU and NATO [Heroes], but then there are countries [Villains] who think and do otherwise. So, this also is making the situation much more difficult, because obviously Russian Federation [Helper of the villains] was enjoying the destabilization attempts of the Balkans where they can have a spillover effect by the means of outsourcing of the aggression that they have already done almost two years ago in Ukraine [Victim].

11. *Territorial integrity*

Territorial integrity is seen by both leaders as key value and as the basis for the normalisation of relations between the two nations, but the way it is constructed leads one down a dead end.

Kurti starts his speech with spatial and temporal arguments to build his narrative in order to make it look more like reality than a political truth:

TABLE 1. Analysis of Kurti Speech

Kurti speech	Deconstruction of the speech
<p><i>On the 24 of September exactly</i> we have had this incursion of a terrorist paramilitary group from Serbia in the North of our country nearby an orthodox Monastery in Banskja in Zvečan, they have assassinated one Kosovar policeman and obviously they wanted to cause escalation of a larger proportion so they can create a general chaos as a pretext for Serbian Army to enter in Kosova.</p> <p>So for the security of our country, we have to take care of these Wagner wannabe groups who wants to cause destabilisation.</p>	<p>Temporal structure Exactly: emphasising the correctness of the temporal structure. Incursion: what happened a terrorist paramilitary group from Serbia: Who did the act in the North of our country: where did it happen near an orthodox Monastery in Banskja in Zvečan: emphasising the correctness of the spatial structure they have assassinated one Kosovar policeman: the second act Assassinated: not killed, so the action was premeditated Kosovar policeman: the victim is a representative of the state they wanted to cause escalation of a larger proportion: the third act. A hypothetical one introduced by the adverb obviously, to make it look real. Create a general chaos: the fourth act, hypothetical a pretext for Serbian Army to enter Kosova: the fifth act, the most important one, which still remains a hypothetical act. Wagner-inspired groups: evoking real criminal groups to empower the effect.</p>

Source: Personal elaboration by the authors

It is evident that this speech is a kind of journalistic report, where Kurti plays the role of the reporter who tells the story from the place, respecting strictly the rules of a good report, which has to fulfil the five Wh-s: who, what, when, where, and why. The audience is helped to believe his version because Kurti has put them within a narrative which is familiar from popular culture and which they have seen thousands of versions of on TV and other media.

Even if it is a smart strategy employed to make the story undoubtedly look real, we have to say that it remains Kurti's version of the story and we know that Kurti is not a journalist, but a politician. Our duty is to see beyond the story and to make it as clear as possible for the readers. "Neural binding allows these permanent general narrative structures to be applied to ever new special cases. That's why the same narrative structures keep recurring, from war to war, from celebrity to celebrity, from one political figure to another" (Lakoff, 2009, p. 38).

Kurti is using the rescue frame to widen the narrative and thereby draw attention to the importance of the situation of Kosovo in the context of the wider geopolitical situation in Europe.

Whereas in the Balkans I think there is an additional risk because the Russian Federation can outsource its expansionist hegemonic drive. (It) can do that through official Belgrade and through different groups like Wagner and Night Wolves who have been seen in the Balkans from Republika Srpska in Bosnia to Serbia. So I worry because it will be more convenient and easy for them to have the spillover effect in the Balkans.

In doing this, he is transferring the fear that he has evoked in his original, core, narrative to a new narrative about new events (Lakoff, 2009, p. 41):

The brain supplies the reasons. First, stresses like fear (of terrorist attacks), worry (say, about finances, health care, and soon), and overwork tend to activate the norepinephrine system, the system of nega-

tive emotions. The result is a reduced capacity to notice. Second, the right conceptual framework must be in place in order to recognize apparently different events as the same kind of event.

12. *Duality*

In Vučić's references to the Western countries, he mentions Europe, in its various incarnations (Europe, the European Union, the Council of Europe), 17 times. Each time, the context is of Serbia's partnership with or membership of such organisations. By contrast, he mentions the USA only once (although he does mention the US State Secretary [sic] Blinken twice), and also Euro Atlantic integration twice (in a phrase which he uses twice in different parts of the speech).

More strikingly, that the NATO 1999 intervention (which was to lead to the establishment of a Kosovo independent of Serbia) was carried out by European nations and by the USA is a point he does not make explicit. Elsewhere, and with no hint of irony, he speaks of "western powers" and of "powerful countries", almost as if these were separate from Europe or the USA. This displays then a narrative which is selective in what it represents and in how it presents the relationships between the same.

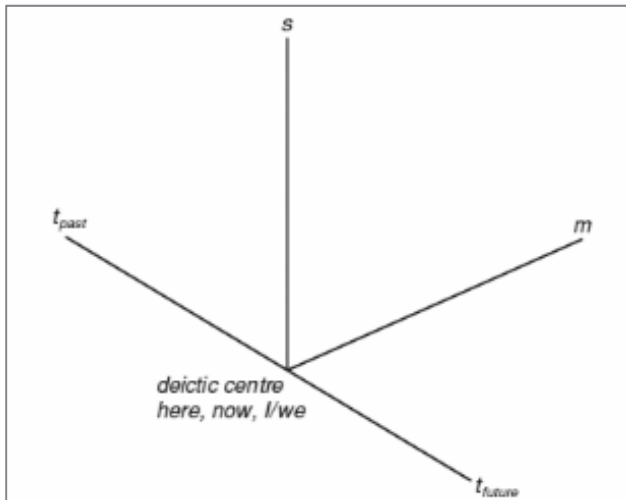
As regards the Kosovo intervention by NATO, his language gets emotional, drawing a specific parallel between the behaviour of certain UN members then with now: "[...] almost all western powers brutally violated both the UN Charter and the UN Resolution 1244, which had been passed in this renowned Organization, as they denied and violated precisely those principles they are defending today, and it happened 24 and exactly 15 years ago." It is again notable that, despite his indignation, he still fails to specify precisely who he believes deserves such criticism, which is in itself revealing, more in what he does not say than what he actually says:

“When you accept a particular narrative, you ignore or hide realities that contradict it. Narratives have a powerful effect in hiding reality” (Lakoff, 2009, p. 37).

13. *Morality*

Spatial representation in discourse is particularly important in the study of political discourse, and morality and lawfulness can have a conceptual representation in spatial terms. If politics is about cooperation and conflict over allocation of resources, such resources are frequently of a spatial, that is, geographical or territorial, kind (Chilton, 2004, p. 57). In his book ‘Analysing Political Discourse’, Chilton (2004, p. 58) represents the dimensions of political deixis by this diagram of three axes, space, time and modality.

Fig. 2. The Dimensions of Political Deixis



Source: Chilton P. (2004:58)

The centre represents the origin of other dimensions, space (s), time (t) and modality (m) axes. People tend to put themselves at the centre of this diagram. “At the remote end of s is Other. Participants that have roles in the discourse world as agents, patients, locations, etc., are located closer to or more remote from Self, whether or not the discourse indicates the location explicitly by way of some expressions such as ‘near’, ‘close’, ‘remote’, etc” (Chilton, 2004, p. 57). All the other entities (arguments) and processes (predicates) are situated by the speaker related to ontological spaces determined by their coordinates on the axes of the diagram, as depicted in the Figure.

Politicians consciously put other people, events and objects along a scale of remoteness from the Self (*hic et nunc*), relying on underlying assumptions and indexical cues. On the scale of m axis Self represents the epistemic truth and the deontic right. According to Saeed (1997), the deontic meaning is intertwined with various forms of social understanding including the speaker’s moral and legal beliefs, as well as their perceptions of power and authority. Self represents moral and truth and all other versions of them are situated further away from the deictic centre.

In this sense, instead of a list of specific grievances, backed up by historical data, Vučić makes recourse to abstract principles which are afforded a high profile in his speech. He uses forms of the term “principles” 22 times (and “values” which is used synonymously with principle only once: “And in such a world, I believe that one small Serbia, by raising its voice and fighting for universal values of principles of inviolability of internationally recognized borders”).

Interestingly, in Vučić’s discourse, the notion of principles is usually related directly to the UN Charter, and by doing this, he is setting Serbia up as a defender of those of the UN

Charter against the unnamed powers who wish to ignore them, or only selectively apply them:

I am the President of Serbia in my second presidential term; on countless of occasions, I was under different political pressures, and I am a political veteran, and what I will tell you today is the most important for me. Principles do not change from one circumstance to another. Principles do not apply only on the strong one, they apply to all. If that's not the case, then, they are no longer principles. And that is why I believe that in the modern world there will either be principles, and the same rules will apply to all, or, as the world, we will end up in the deepest divisions in our history, in the most difficult conflicts and in problems we will not manage to cope with.

By portraying Serbia, the Victim, as valiant, steadfast, yet relatively powerless, but at the same time defender of fundamental codified principles (the weak who fight for justice), Vučić is creating a typical narrative where the 'good' win: where David eventually defeats Goliath.

As regards, morality and morals, Vučić uses forms of "moral" five times, three in two successive paragraphs:

While for three days in a row we pledge from this place to respect of principles and rules of the UN Charter, precisely violation of the respective is rooted in most of the problems in international relations, and implementation of dual standards is an open invitation for all those who strive to achieve their interests through war and violence, by violating norms of international law but also basic human moralities.

All the speakers so far - and I believe all who will speak after me - spoke about the necessity of changes in the world, underlining their country as the example of morality and commitment to the law and world justice.

Morals are arguably less clear-cut notions than principles, their being the subject of religious discourse and ethics. Unlike principles, they are not codified in law or in charters like that of the UN, instead they are typically laid out or exemplified in texts of a religious nature.

By complaining about powerful countries thinking they have the right to impose their morals on others, Vučić is in effect recognising the fact the notion of morality may be open to different interpretations. His point seems to be that smaller nations like Serbia have a right to defend their version of morality against those of more powerful nations, and as such is treating morals as something relative and negotiable, whereas elsewhere he treats principles as fixed and non-negotiable.

Kurti, by contrast, does not cite morality or principles explicitly. Rather he draws parallels between republics and empires, between democracies and absolute monarchies. In this way, he alludes to political philosophy of the past (ancient Rome and the Enlightenment) and makes it clear to anyone who can recognise the allusions what his principles are, and what he considers moral:

...They are part of the big conflict of our times and that is the conflict between democracy and autocracy, but I would also say between Republic and Empire, or democratic Republic and Monarchy, monarchy in the authoritarian sense. Because we have these phenomena, where certain countries formally are democratic, but if you look inside, you have one Leader, one Party one Church, no political pluralism, not much care for human rights, not rule of law in place, therefore it resembles much more like XIX century monarchies, and democracy is fighting not only with autocracy but also with presidents who are more king wannabe [gesticulating with an ironical face] ...

14. *Conclusion*

In the corpus analysed, the specific topic of different traditional cultures associated with Serbians and Albanians (the majority of the Kosovo population) is not touched upon by either of the speakers, although it is of course the proverbial elephant in the room. This fact is in itself interesting but is probably accounted for by the forums in which the leaders' speeches are given. In any case, as linguists, such matters are not our primary concern.

In this article we have focused on frames and narratives, which could be described as "the culture of the political discourse". In doing so, we have applied discourse analysis to the culture of communication, in the anthropological sense, because the language as manifested as discourse is the principal means by which identities and ways of thinking, both of individuals and communities, are constructed, created, shaped, and either maintained or modified. As Claude Lévi-Strauss, the anthropologist and ethnologist, said "Qui dit homme dit langage, et qui dit langage dit société." (Claude Lévi-Strauss, 1955).

The linguistic examples discussed here come from political speeches, which presumably have been carefully drafted and redrafted. They are then irrefutably the product of conscious political choices, and our duty is to not take such decisions in blind faith, but to question everything carefully. Are these Heroes going to win? Is it possible to free these Heroes from their frames? We think it is possible, but readily admit that it will not be easy or something that will happen of its own accord. We say this because the cultural models which are in our brains influence our unconscious most of the time. Since cultural narratives define our possibilities, challenges, and actual lives, people will go on voting for their favourite political

leaders for as long as they see them as Heroes, or at least as long as they see their rivals as Villians.

However, Heroes/Leaders are in a position to analyse a situation better than the people/voters, and to identify and evaluate the various solutions. They thus have the opportunity, and the duty, to guide their audience towards future scenarios, and equally importantly to create new narrations in order to make the same comprehensible, and palatable. Hitherto, in the conflict between Kosovo and Serbia, each leader has limited himself to constructing a simple narrative that they know their own community will immediately recognise and understand. This is because they are in essence repeating stories that each community has been telling itself for decades, even centuries. If leaders do not modify the way that they speak or the narrative frames that they use, they will never succeed in convincing the other side, and political discourse will remain sectarian and progress towards reconciliation will continue to be slow. There is a real need therefore that the leadership of both countries embrace the responsibility of making an attempt to change their narratives and discourse styles in order that new avenues of understanding and comprehension can be opened up and explored.

In short, if leaders want to act like simple politicians and merely repeat what they know their voters already believe, and want to have confirmed, then there is little hope for progress. However, if instead, they choose to act like statespeople, or opinion makers, with the capacity to think outside the box, they can start to steer the narrative towards the ideals of progress and freedom, and thereby guide their respective peoples away from the never-ending spiral of conflict, towards new narratives that engender and foster mutual understanding.

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