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Constructing Privileged and Oppositional Future in Dialogic Political Speeches

0. Introduction

In this paper I explore ways in which state-level political speakers define and legitimize future policies by construing different policy options in terms of ‘privileged’ and ‘oppositional’ futures. Privileged and oppositional futures can be described as conceptual projections of alternative policy visions occurring in quasi-dialogic chunks of political monologue (most typically, a political speech), revealing different evidential, mood, and modality patterns (Dunmire 2011; Cap 2017). Privileged future (PF) involves the speaker’s preferred or acknowledged vision and is articulated through absolute modality, declarative mood and evidential markers, which derive from factual evidence, history, and reason. In contrast, oppositional future (OF) involves the unwanted and often plainly threatening vision, expressed in a probabilistic stance. In a speech chunk, oppositional future is normally communicated first, and then denied by the subsequent vision of the speaker’s privileged future. This order is dictated by rhetorical norms of persuasive communication, which state that, for maximal persuasion effects, all coercive information is ideally placed toward the end of a discursive sequence (Jowett & O’Donnell 1992).

The structure of the paper is as follows. Section 1 defines privileged and oppositional futures as an inspiring analytical domain in political discourse research, particularly salient in monologue studies. It demonstrates that privileged and oppositional futures blur traditional distinctions between dialogue and monologue and thus invite multiple heterogeneous methods and tools of analysis, including those used in the study of conversational interaction. At the same time, as linguistic pragmatic and discourse functional concepts they reveal links to phenomena under the scope of interdisciplinary models such as Rhetorical Structure, cognitive consistency and credibility theories. Section 2 discusses the linguistic – lexical and grammatical – manifestations of privileged and oppositional futures in (political/public) discourse. It

defines the most common PF and OF markers and their discursive functions. Finally, section 3 includes a brief case study of the use of alternative futures as a rhetorical and legitimization device. The study focuses on construals of privileged and oppositional futures in the contemporary political discourse in Poland, specifically the (anti-)immigration discourse of the ruling Law & Justice party.

1. Privileged and oppositional futures in political discourse

1.1. Political communication as the site of alternative futures

A key ideological component of political communication lies in its anticipations and representations of the future and the rhetorical function those representations serve in implicating discursive practices and physical actions. As the site of the possible and potential, the future constitutes a much contested politico-rhetorical domain through which partisans attempt to wield ideological and political power. Projections of the future can be understood and examined as a type of legitimization device used to shore up calls for particular near-term policies and actions. The ability of dominant political actors to suppress the notion of ‘future potentiality’ by accentuating that of ‘future inevitability’ represents a unique skill, necessary for the performance of political leadership. Indeed, as aptly put by Orwell, ‘who controls the future, controls the present’ (1949, cited in Dunmire 2011: 2).

The practice of construing the future in alternative ways reflects the basic characteristics and goals of political communication. As stated by Habermas (1981), politics is about ‘sharing visions’; it has the primary aim of maximizing the number of common conceptions of current reality, as well as its future developments. The central goal of political communication (Chilton 2004) is, thus, getting others to share a common view on what is good/evil, right/wrong, acceptable/unacceptable, and consequently, how to secure the ‘right’, ‘good’, ‘useful’, ‘just’, ‘acceptable’, against a possible intrusion, in the life of a society, of the ‘wrong’, ‘evil’, ‘harmful’, etc. Soliciting public acceptance for common action entails reconciling the existing differences of opinion through discussion and persuasion. This makes acts of political communication – the most salient ways of ‘doing politics’ – rely for their success on the ability of politicians to present future visions as beneficial or harmful to audience, depending on whether the actions proposed by the leader are approved.

In projecting alternative futures, politicians presuppose various social, political, ideological and even territorial affiliations and distinctions which serve to associate different envisaged developments with interests of distinct social groups. At the most rudimentary level, privileged future represents interests of members of political leader’s home camp construed symbolically as ideological ‘US’. In contrast, oppositional future represents interests of members of an adversarial camp construed as ideological ‘THEM’. These latter interests may be furthered by actions undertaken

by entities of the adversarial camp, but also by activity of the home group or, as often happens, a lack thereof. The projected activity of the adversarial THEM group – occurring as part of the oppositional future scenario – constitutes a coercive element in soliciting legitimization of actions proposed by political leader. This mechanism has been broadly documented in political discourse analysis, notably in critical studies of propaganda and coercion (Oddo 2018), as well as ‘proximization’ (Cap 2017).

In these growing areas of political discourse research, construals of alternative futures are taken as a central element of threat construction and anxiety and fear generation. For example, oppositional future plays a key role in temporal proximization, a strategic conceptualization of imminence of an external threat (Cap 2013; Hart 2014; Filardo Llamas, Hart & Kaal 2016). Creating and forcing the vision of an outside threat as growing with time, political leaders construe the present as a short and only timeframe in which to undertake a preventive action. The ways of construing oppositional future for the sake of temporal proximization involve a variety of conceptual as well as linguistic means. Cognitive linguistic and political research shows (e.g. Stengel, MacDonald & Nabers 2019) that the most common conceptual strategy is to employ a historical flashback to endorse the future scenario. Specifically, a negative or plainly tragic event of the past is recalled and presented as likely to re-occur unless the leader’s plan for preventive action – his ‘privileged future’ - is approved and followed.

Regarding its linguistic manifestations in proximization, oppositional future is often enacted by lexical markers of indefiniteness such as indefinite articles and pronouns. The pragmatic function of these markers is to create the aura of a growing threat that extends from the present (or even the past) until the future, but whose precise outlines cannot be determined, thus making the threat bigger. A famous historical example of this kind of strategy is G.W. Bush’s use of the phrase ‘a September morning’ to refer to the 9/11 attacks and their potential re-occurrence in the future sanctioning a pre-emptive war on Iraq (2003). The indefinite article in the phrase construes the invoked event as undefined in terms of the time of happening and thus possible to (re-)occur at any moment (see Cap 2013 and Oddo 2018 for an analysis).

1.2. PF and OF as forms of virtual dialogue

In structural terms, privileged and oppositional futures can be defined as monologic forms of ‘hidden dialogue’ (Bakhtin 1981), in which the speaker addresses, anticipates and reacts to another’s discourse, but that other voice is not directly present in the speaker’s discourse. The direct statements, opinions, anticipations, etc., of the ‘interlocutor’ are omitted, but they are presupposed, implied or reported in the speaker’s responses to them, for example:

- (1) [IMPLIED] We could wait and hope that Saddam does not give weapons to terrorists or develop a nuclear program to blackmail the world. (OF)

But I am convinced that is hope against all evidence. (PF) (G.W. Bush, January 28, 2003)

- (2) [REPORTED] Some have argued that confronting the threat from Iraq could detract from the war against terror. (OF)
 To the contrary, confronting the threat posed by Iraq is crucial to winning the war on terror. (PF) (G.W. Bush, January 28, 2003)

Examples (1) and (2) illustrate cases which, from a theoretical standpoint, blur traditional distinctions between dialogue and monologue. Instead of directly voicing opinion and presenting a future course of action, the speaker invites an indefinite adversary to take part in a virtual dialogue on what options are available. This generates specific legitimization benefits, as by openly considering alternatives the speaker makes a strategic display of rationality and responsibility (Mercier & Sperber 2017).

In contrast to former views presupposing an orthodox pattern of dialogic interaction involving genuine presence of all communication parties, recent advances in discourse analysis recognize a significant number of virtual dialogue forms in many thematic domains (Flowerdew & Richardson 2018; Hart & Cap 2014). In political discourse studies, virtual dialogues are identified and researched in, for instance, genres of online communication (Cap & Okulska 2013; Xie, Yus & Haberland 2020). Kopytowska (2013) demonstrates that there are genres – for example blogs – that make use of conversational techniques such as advance hedging (Kecskes 2000) or sequential correction (Mey 2013), even though, technically, they follow a standard monologue pattern. In another paper, I have explored similar characteristics of monologic genres involving follow-up structures (Cap 2015).

The most comprehensive study of alternative futures as virtual dialogue forms in political discourse is Dunmire's (2011) research into conceptual underpinnings as well as linguistic enactment of the 'Bush Doctrine', the policy response of George W. Bush's administration to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The key articulation of the Bush Doctrine has been the 2002 United States National Security Strategy, which Dunmire analyzes with regard to its main arguments concerning knowledge of future 'reality' and future action. In general, Dunmire (2011) looks at the evidential basis, discursive structure and rhetorical function of such arguments. At a more specific level, she explores the linguistic construal of field (Halliday 1994), examining the role lexico-grammatical mechanisms (e.g. nominalization) play in transforming agency and temporality in such a way as to naturalize the future as a 'reality' that requires a particular military strategy. She also examines the tenor relations (Halliday & Martin 1993) embedded in and projected through speeches expressing the Doctrine to demonstrate how mood and modality serve to put competing visions of the future into virtual dialogue that implicates the public. Finally, Dunmire (2011) shows how alternative futures construed in virtual dialogue forms partake in acts of threat construction and threat management. Altogether,

Dunmire's (2011) study, involving a broad conceptual account combined with rigid lexical and structural analysis, goes a long way toward specifying formal linguistic markers of privileged and oppositional futures in (political) discourse (see section 2).

Research such as Dunmire's (2011) shows that the concepts of alternative futures and virtual dialogue meet well on the functional plane, attracting a multitude of different and heterogeneous methods and tools of analysis. The most evident tools derive from such disciplines, approaches and domains as Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Cognitive Linguistics, Pragmatics and, of course, Dialogue Studies. Yet, in fact, there are models addressing closely related phenomena which are, apparently, only partly 'linguistic' or situated completely outside the domain of linguistics – at least its cradle domain. These models and theories seem to offer some extra explanatory power, either by themselves or in combination with the mainstream linguistic and discourse approaches. We discuss them in the next section.

1.3. Extending analytical toolkit for alternative futures

1.3.1. Rhetorical Structure Theory

Developed by Mann & Thompson (1988 and later research), Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST) is a text-analytical and text-generation model that works at the intersection of text linguistics, computational linguistics and formal logic. It accounts for text organization by means of relations that hold between parts of text such as sentences and sentence equivalents. As a theory that deals with text meaning relative to the meaning of sentences, RST efficiently integrates with some of the established theories of the meaning of discourse, including the theory of speech acts and conversational logic (Tsohatzidis 1994). The main tenet of RST is the existence of the so-called 'relational propositions', which can be described as logico-rhetorical relationships between parts of a text that make the text comprehensible. Relational propositions are implicit propositions which arise when clauses are combined to form a text. The crucial property of relational propositions is that, in combining two parts of a text, they convey important functional information which is not independently derived from either of these parts. Mann & Thompson (1988) propose 15 classes of propositions which carry such information – solutionhood, evidence, justification, motivation, and others. In discourse research, including critical research in political discourse, some of these classes have been successfully appropriated as formal categories of discourse pragmatic functions. For example, relations of solutionhood have been used to account for a pragmatic structure of policy-setting segments in US presidential inaugurals (Windt 1994; Cap 2002).

In Mann & Thompson's (1988) taxonomy, the class that seems to offer the most direct explanatory benefits in the study of alternative futures involves the relational

proposition of ‘anti-thesis – thesis’, which Mann & Thompson illustrate with the following simple example:

- (3) Players want the referee to balance a bad call benefiting one team with a bad call benefiting the other. As a referee, I just want to call each play as I see it. (Mann & Thompson 1988: 9)

As evidenced by the example, the relation arises when two conceptions are contrasted, the speaker identifying with one and rejecting the other. This pattern occurs explicitly in the case of alternative futures, but the RST approach allows an extra perspective on – as we noted – the implicit proposition that emerges from the combination of the antithetical positions and, importantly, the way in which they are combined. Thus, on the RST view, a direct contrast between opposite positions expressed in a sequence where the speaker’s position is asserted as latter constitutes a logico-rhetorical device to enhance the speaker’s ethos and endorse his choice as based on rational consideration of options (see also e.g. Van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004). Furthermore, the explicitly contrastive, ‘black-and-white’ pattern within which the above legitimating function is performed, facilitates a correct uptake of that function by the addressee. These findings and interpretations go a long way if we try to describe the function of similar stretches of discourse in terms of alternative futures. Namely, considering the RST perspective, we can venture a hypothesis that strategic displays of specific sequences of other- and self-visions (such as OFs and PFs) are not only self-legitimization devices, but also effective ploys of discourse comprehension, thus taking the legitimating function even further. This is apparently where RST imbues the framework of alternative futures with its non-negligible ‘rhetorical’ component.

1.3.2. Consistency and credibility

The rhetorical appeal of alternative futures can be further explored in regard to some long-existing findings in social psychology, particularly the concept of ‘consistency’. Proposed by authors of cognitive dissonance models (from Festinger 1957 to Jowett & O’Donnell 1992), consistency can be described as a rhetorical behaviour involving communication of controversial information in textual structures following a specific linguistic and temporal order. The most seminal version of consistency theory (in Festinger 1957) posits that the best credibility effects can be expected if the speaker produces his or her message in line with psychological, social, political, cultural, religious, etc., predispositions of the addressee. However, since at the beginning a full acceptance of the message is almost never possible, it is essential that the novel message is at least tentatively or partly acceptable – then, its acceptability and thus the speaker’s credibility tend to increase over time.

This tendency can be attributed to a human drive toward consistency in belief. According to Festinger (1957), people possess the need for ‘homeostasis’, a state of

mental stability that makes them avoid any dissonance in their judgments, especially with regard to the same or similar issues. Consequently, if faced with a new message producing a potential conflict with the existing ideological, psychological or moral groundwork, they try hard to identify any positive aspects of the message so it could still be internalized as an element of that groundwork. Naturally, the precondition obtains that the message is not entirely rejectable from the very beginning; at least some parts of it must be congruent with the addressee's predispositions. In public discourse this often means that the speaker begins his argument by invoking some universally acceptable premises, and then follows up on these claims to present the more controversial information. The first part of the sequence usually involves alternative futures. This is because alternative futures carry, as we noted, essentially black-and-white, even simplistic visions, which easily add to the rationality and credibility of the speaker. As such, they often pave the way for more controversial messages:

- (4) (a) Finally, to those nations who would make themselves our adversary, we offer not a pledge but a request: that both sides begin anew the quest for peace (PF), before the dark powers of destruction unleashed by science engulf all humanity in planned or accidental self-destruction (OF).
- (b) We dare not tempt them with weakness. For only when our arms are sufficient beyond doubt can we be certain beyond doubt that they will never be employed.
(John F. Kennedy, Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961)

In this famous speech, Kennedy makes use of a PF-OF opposition to construe a simple and credible vision of international conflict (4a), which can be avoided if Americans keep their pace in the arms race (4b). The assertions in (4b) are certainly disputable, but their potential negative effects fade away in the aura of rationality and credibility established in (4a) (and Kennedy's earlier claims in the speech). The privileged and oppositional futures in (4a) are structured in a non-standard way (conventionally, PF follows OF, not precedes it), but this does not detract from the general function of the sequence.

1.3.3. Cheater detection and displays of coherence

Issues of credibility relevant to construction of alternative futures have also been explored by cognitive scientists in the area of evolutionary psychology (Axelrod 1984; Cosmides 1989; Sperber 2000; among others). In this domain of research, the most relevant and interesting finding concerns the existence and function of the so-called 'cheater detection module'. The cheater detection module was originally (Axelrod 1984; Cosmides 1989) considered a logico-rhetorical device that evolved in human cognition to resist acts of deception, through the checking of speaker's coherence. In the course of time, this initial characterization has undergone several modifications, which involve seeing the module not only as a defensive mechanism but also as

a persuasion tool, particularly useful in public communication and enactment of social and political leadership. On Sperber's (2000) view, while for an addressee the module is 'a means to filter the communicated information', for the speaker it is 'a means to penetrate the filters of others' (: 136). In this communicative 'arms race', the speaker makes strategic displays of discourse coherence to neutralize the operation of the cheater detection module in the addressee, in order to force his or her visions. These displays are usually performed in sequences of assertion acts, which the latter can be used to construe alternative futures. Gough & Talbot (1996) indicate that the coherence of these sequences (and thus their potential to overcome the module) is greatly enhanced by the use of logical terms ('and', 'or', 'if') as well as items marking inferential relationships ('therefore', 'since', 'nevertheless', etc.). These terms are considered adaptive devices for persuasion and coercion, facilitating acceptance of ideational information and 'cueing ideological assumptions' (Gough & Talbot 1996). This finding seems particularly important for the study of privileged and oppositional futures, in the sense that it points to the crucial role of lexical choices used to sequence, compare, contrast or otherwise connect the textual forms expressing the alternative visions.

2. Lexico-grammatical and pragmatic markers of alternative futures

The above research in coherence displays leads us to consider the pragmalinguistic side of alternative futures. We focus on this issue in three brief sections.

2.1. Grammatical mood

Differences in grammatical mood are among the most salient features of sentences and phrases used to construe alternative futures. As a rule, oppositional future involves the use of interrogative mood, and privileged future involves mostly declarative and sometimes imperative mood. These alternatives provide a space for all actors/participants in the construed events, either as requesters of information or action, or as provider(s) of information or as doer(s) of action. From a pragmatic standpoint, the use of interrogative mood signals the speaker's recognition that his audience is not completely unanimous in the approval of his vision and further explanation and justification is necessary. In political discourse, this positions the speaker as a democratically-minded leader who gives due consideration to the views of the public (cf. Van Dijk 2008). The text in interrogative mood is normally followed by a sentence or phrase in declarative mood, whereby the speaker mentions evidence to dispel doubts or just asserts his rationality and in-depth knowledge of the situation. The possession of this knowledge authorizes the speaker to prescribe his privileged future. The entire pattern can be illustrated with the following example:

- (5) [INTERROGATIVE, OF] You ask whether and how urgent the Al-Qaeda danger is to Britain. [DECLARATIVE, PF] Our intelligence has irrefutable evidence that the danger is already significant and it only grows worse with time. (Tony Blair speech to the House of Commons, October 2, 2001)

In this example, PM Tony Blair solicits approval of the British House of Commons for the involvement of UK forces in a retaliatory war operation in Afghanistan, launched by the US in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. The ‘questions’ in the interrogative part of course do not come from MPs, or even from the public at large; they come from Tony Blair’s articulation and representation of the questions and views the public has concerning the Al-Qaeda terrorist threat and the rationality of joining the Afghan war operation. The presupposed difference in these opinions serves to construe, in the first sentence, the oppositional future of inaction. In contrast to this implied vision, the second sentence carries an explicit vision of threat sanctioning the speaker’s privileged future which involves action. The question/answer format generating the two futures is thus, in Dunmire’s (2011) words, prefabricated and mediated. As such, it represents a virtual dialogue (1.2) and, as Fairclough (2003) puts it, a ‘simulated conversation’ that aims to ‘dramatically enact a dialogue’ with a critical voice rather than to actually represent that voice (: 48). The goal is to provide a virtual position from which the audience/public can participate (or rather feel that they can) in the government’s ‘dialogue’ about joining the war¹.

2.2. Modality and nominalization

As observed by Dunmire (2011), in the study of alternative futures the conception of modality goes beyond its conventional representation in terms of modal auxiliaries (such as ‘would’, ‘can’, ‘shall’, etc.), to include all elements that convey the status, authority and reliability of the message (Hodge & Kress 1988). On this extended conception, modality concerns relationships between ‘participants’ in the virtual dialogue enacting privileged and oppositional futures, bearing directly upon tenor relations (Halliday & Martin 1993). The reason why modality is important in the analysis of alternative futures is its crucial role in mediating the contestation over the opposing visions projected in the message. Especially in political discourse, the future advocated by the speaker is not presented in isolation from other, competing projections. Rather, the different projections get compared and contrasted, thereby ostensibly enabling the audience a careful consideration of alternative visions of what should be done and what will be in the future (Dunmire 2011: ch. 4).

¹ As a matter of digression, consider a strikingly similar interplay of oppositional and privileged futures involving changes in grammatical moods in the current ‘war on Covid-19’ discourse: ‘Some practitioners ask if we could fight Covid-19 with standard pneumonia measures. The evidence we have says we must strike it with a full force in its earliest stages. We must be able to wipe out all the infected cells in one strike, otherwise it takes a moment before the virus continues to replicate and migrate around the lungs.’ (Dr. Ai Fen, director of the emergency unit at Wuhan Central hospital, China, in an interview for *Ren Wu* magazine on March 10, 2020. See Cap (2021) for an analysis).

Typically in these projections, oppositional future is conceptualized as potential and possible, involving probabilistic lexical choices such as ‘might’, ‘could’, ‘hope’, ‘wonder’, ‘worry’ or ‘argue’. These choices construe the future as equivocal, uncertain and deriving from lack of knowledge. In terms of agency, oppositional future expressed in a probabilistic stance involves passivity of entities in the US camp and a potentially threatening activity of entities in the THEM camp. In contrast, privileged future reveals an oracular stance and is articulated through the ‘absolute modality’ deriving from evidence, history and reason. Thus, it involves lexico-grammatical choices such as ‘is’, ‘will be’ or ‘has to be’, expressing the modality of categorical truth, the latter often based on evidence from a past analogy. Similar to mood, the variations in modality occur usually within the implicit question/answer format. Here is an example from a recent discourse of the Brexit referendum campaign:

- (6) Are we better off with mass immigration, you may wonder? To me, there is an issue here called the quality of life and I think that matters more than money. Cause, I am getting worried of my kids coming home from school being taught about every other religion in the world, celebrating every other religious holiday but not actually being taught about Christianity. Cause, I would remind you, of the eight people who committed those atrocities in Paris a mere three months ago,² five of them had got into Europe posing as refugees. So, there is an issue here and it has to be dealt with urgently. (Nigel Farage, address at the UKIP spring conference, February 29, 2016)

In this speech, Nigel Farage, the leader of the Eurosceptic United Kingdom Independence Party, builds his case for the Leave vote, arguing that further membership in the EU and thus a continuing lack of control over mass immigration from the Continent is a threat to British people. The oppositional future in Farage’s argument involves the vision of implications and consequences of staying in the EU, such as a cultural and religious change, an ideological transformation and, eventually, a possible life threat. This vision is expressed in probabilistic modal choices (‘may’, ‘wonder’, ‘worried’, placed in phrases in interrogative) and text chunks stressing a growing activity of potentially threatening THEM entities (‘I would remind you ...’). The privileged future involves a prompt and direct action (‘it has to be dealt with urgently’), undertaken in response to an evidence-based (Paris attacks) recognition of the threat. As such, the privileged future is meant to prevent the vision salient in the oppositional future.

An extremely interesting though non-standard area in which alternative futures and modality meet in political discourse, particularly fear-inducing coercive discourse, is the use of nominalizations, such as ‘danger’ or ‘threat’. As a nominalization, ‘threat’ conflates present and future by being simultaneously descriptive and projective: it ‘describes’ the present moment and projects the future that ‘can’, ‘will’ or ‘should’ evolve from that moment. As noted by Graham (2001), by ‘exercising the potentiality in

² Farage refers to a series of coordinated terrorist attacks that occurred on November, 13, 2015 in Paris, leaving 130 people dead and another 413 injured.

certain nominals, texts 'strenuously, though almost invisibly, exercise the tense system to portray the future and imagined states as if they actually existed in the here-and-now' (: 767). Dunmire (2011) observes that this is not the case with corresponding verbal forms (such as 'threaten'), as these mark processes and actions which are located in specific temporal moments and are coded as to degree of likelihood, certainty, volition, and so forth. Nominalizations, however, do not receive explicit temporal or modal coding and, as such, appear to reference extant entities. Thus, the nominal 'threat' highlights the presentness of 'threaten' and suppresses its future, as yet-to-be realized dimension, thereby rendering the threat as imminent (Dunmire 2011: 63).

In pragma-rhetorical terms, the lack of explicit temporal and modal coding in nominalizations such as 'threat' adds toward speaker's options in presenting particular visions as 'privileged' or 'oppositional' futures. As a nominal, 'threat' is a condensation of propositions through which the speaker can project his vision as privileged or oppositional freely over a course of time, in which latter context frequently changes, rendering original visions invalid in a new situation or circumstances. However, in this new context, the speaker maintains his capacity to 'expand' the meaning of the threat nominal into a new proposition, which fits the current conditions. An illuminating example of such a rhetorical 'update' is the change in G.W. Bush's argument for the Iraq war forced by the loss of the original premise for intervention:

- (7) Back then [in March 2003], all the major ingredients for war were there [in Iraq].
All these ingredients said to me: threat. You don't deal with a threat once you see it. (G.W. Bush, November 19, 2003)

The argument in (7) in an attempt to redefine and uphold legitimization of the March 2003 intervention in Iraq, despite the later loss of the main premise for war, i.e. the (alleged) possession of weapons of mass destruction by Saddam Hussein (see Cap 2006, 2013 for an analysis)³. This redefinition involves a change in the interpretation of 'threat' as a concept and the resulting change in the vision projected as privileged future. These changes detract from the original March 2003 conceptualization of the Iraqi threat as a matter of 'here-and-now', turning the threat into an element of undefined yet potentially near future. The latter conceptualization constitutes the new privileged future, assuming the key role in keeping the legitimization pattern intact.

2.3. Evidentiality

The function of evidentiality, i.e. evidential contrasts, in construing scenarios of alternative futures is closely related to the roles played by specific modal and mood configurations. In a way, the lexical and grammatical material used to construct evidential contrasts complements the linguistic forms enacting mood and modality

³ The U.N. inspections in September and October 2003 did not confirm the presence or production of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq (Silberstein 2004).

in their contribution to the speaker's displays of coherence, credibility and political leadership. Evidential contrasts make a distinction between oppositional future and privileged future based on the kind/source of evidence used to construe the alternative scenarios. Oppositional future involves scenarios unsupported by concrete, tangible evidence and projected, typically, through a mental process such as 'asking' or 'believing'. Consequently, OF scenarios are construed, as we noted, through probabilistic modality and interrogative mood. Privileged future involves, in contrast, visions projected by unmediated assertions grounded in reality. As such, PF visions are forced by categorical, absolute modality statements in declarative mood. Overall, the alternative futures projected through a joint use of mood, modality and evidential markers enact yet another conceptual feature of texts in which they appear, that is an explicit US vs THEM distinction. In her comprehensive analysis of linguistic articulations of the Bush Doctrine, Dunmire (2011; see section 1.2 above) provides examples such as the following:

- (8) Some citizens wonder why we need to confront it now. And there's a reason. We have experienced the horror of September 11. We have seen that those who hate America are willing to crash airplanes into buildings. Our enemies would be no less willing, in fact they would be eager, to use biological or chemical or nuclear weapons. Knowing these realities, American must not ignore the threat gathering against us. (G.W. Bush, October 7, 2002. Quoted after Dunmire [2011: 115])

Indeed, looking at this example, all typical markers of mood, modality and evidence used to construe alternative futures are there. The mood opposition is salient in the opening sentence ('Some citizens wonder why...', in interrogative mood) and assertions that follow (in declarative mood). Their entire sequence features, in addition to its 'default' declarative mood, a brief segment in imperative mood, ('America must not...'), which is used to strengthen the speaker's final call. The modality opposition involves contrast between possibility and potentiality (marked by 'some' and 'wonder', again in the opening sentence), and certainty ('Our enemies would ...', in fact they would be eager'), the latter deriving from rational consideration of a past experience ('the horror of September 11'). Finally, the evidential opposition involves contrast between equivocal judgment based on 'evidence' mediated by a mental process (of 'wondering') and knowledge based on factual evidence. That evidence, and thus the knowledge, are endorsed through a discursive transformation of essentially speculative data ('Our enemies would be no less willing') into factual data grounded in reality ('in fact', 'these realities'). The three kinds of opposition interact, permeate and complement each other to define privileged and oppositional futures relative to the speaker and his audience in the US camp, and to his adversaries in the THEM camp.

3. A case study of alternative futures in Polish anti-immigration discourse

The brief study below is a sample analysis of alternative futures in Polish political discourse. Its focus is on (anti-)immigration discourse of the Law & Justice party, which has been ruling Poland since its landslide victory in the 2015 parliamentary elections. Law & Justice (L&J) is a strongly conservative, far-right party, whose anti-European and essentially nationalistic stance has been provoking multiple tensions between Poland and main institutions of the EU, such as the European Commission and the European Parliament. The outbreak of migration crisis in 2015 substantially increased these tensions. In the past five years, the L&J government has vehemently refused to honor the EU refugee relocation agenda agreed upon by Poland's former government. Defending their position, L&J leaders engage, particularly on the home front, in highly radical, fear-inducing discourse, which construes immigration, mainly from the Middle East and East Africa, as a major cultural, ideological, economic and potentially physical threat to Poland.

3.1. Data

The analysis draws on a collection of 64 statements and comments made by the most prominent L&J politicians between November 2015 and March 2017. The authors include Jarosław Kaczyński (L&J chairman), Beata Szydło (the then Prime Minister in the L&J government), Witold Waszczykowski (the then Minister of Foreign Affairs) and Mariusz Błaszczak (the Minister of the Interior). The collection is part of a corpus of several hundred texts used to research legitimization and coercive aspects of L&J's discourse in multiple domains (Cap 2021).

3.2. Analysis

The anti-immigration discourse of Law and Justice is a coercive, threat-based discourse, which includes multiple fear appeals in the service of legitimization of migration and (anti-)immigration policies. The threat element in this discourse falls, generally, into two categories. On the one hand, immigration is considered in ideological and economic terms, in which it is construed as a threat to national identity as well as economy and welfare state. On the other, it is construed in purely material or physical terms, as a threat to security of the state and personal safety of its people. These two conceptualizations are mutually related on a few planes, including argument sequence. Namely, the construal of immigration as an identity and economic threat paves the way, over time, for a more complex and altogether more policy-consequential conceptualization of migrants as a security threat. Thus, in the period between November 2015 and March 2017, the first months see statements addressing mostly ideological and economic issues. In these statements, evaluations

of the present state of affairs serve to outline future visions, involving oppositional and privileged futures:

- (9) There are estimates saying that over one million people from Africa and the Middle East may be arriving in Europe in the next two years. Under the relocation schema, we are powerless to deny them entry or benefits. Following this schema, we lose control of our country's borders, our identity, and our welfare state. Our main responsibility is to uphold the safety and well-being of Polish people. This has been our election promise and we will keep it. We refuse to sacrifice our freedom, security and economy for political correctness. From the very beginning we have said that this issue [of immigration] should be resolved by assisting refugees outside the EU. It is our right to decide whom we welcome to our own house. We do not take foreign orders. (Jarosław Kaczyński, January 10, 2016)

In this parliamentary speech, L&J's leader Jarosław Kaczyński constructs two competing visions of the country's policy on immigration. One vision, Kaczyński's oppositional future, involves following the EU relocation agenda approved by Poland's former government. The other, his privileged future, involves refusing to honor the existing agreement. Since the latter act counts as violation of European law and thus puts the L&J government and the country in a direct conflict with Brussels, Kaczyński develops a comprehensive ideological argument to support his party's position. The key element in this argument is defining the role, priorities, and accountability of the government in relation to its people. According to Kaczyński, the 'main responsibility is to uphold the safety and well-being of Polish people'. As an 'election promise', this obligation is essentially non-negotiable and independent of any arising issues or circumstances. Realizing this obligation is the central element of the privileged vision construed in the text. It entails people's right to 'freedom and security' and, crucially under the circumstances, their right 'to decide whom [they] welcome to [their] own house'. The HOUSE metaphor in the final part of the speech substantially adds to the aura of national solidarity invoked in the privileged vision (Musolf 2016), cementing the social in-group and mobilizing it against the scenario in the oppositional vision. The oppositional scenario construes immigration as a major and growing threat to all of the rights of the people defined as part of the privileged vision, from cultural and identity rights to welfare state.

The conceptual distinction between alternative visions enacting the privileged and oppositional future in Kaczyński's speech draws on premeditated lexico-grammatical choices and structural configurations, and, in regard to its credibility and persuasion effects, the presence of ploys able to activate specific uptake mechanisms (cf. 1.3). The linguistic, textual and functional properties of the text are of course mutually related. The oppositional future is construed through probabilistic modality ('may be arriving in Europe'), which makes the threat element largely underspecified in its temporal dimension. This, as we have observed (2.2), only makes the threat bigger. Furthermore, the oppositional vision draws on the use of items which denote, on the one hand, the caliber of the envisaged impact ('over one million people') and, on

the other, passivity and powerlessness of entities in the home camp ('powerless to deny', 'lose control'). In contrast, the privileged future in Kaczyński's speech involves absolute modality expressed through unmediated assertions grounded in reality and addressing indisputable ideologies, truths or obligations ('Our main responsibility is', 'This has been our election promise and we will keep it', 'We do not take foreign orders'). These truths and explicitly stated obligations, such as being faithful to campaign promises, constitute, along with the rational assessment ('There are estimates') and direct solution proposals ('this issue should be resolved by') the main evidential framework of the text. The salient presence of lexical material defining that framework is a crucial feature that adds to both easy comprehension and credibility of the speaker's message.

Regarding the latter properties, the distinction drawn in the text between the two alternative visions is strong enough to activate all the principal mechanisms of successful uptake and persuasion (cf. 1.3.1-3). The macro-structure of the speech, involving an explicit anti-thesis – thesis sequence, provides an efficient argumentation format, in which the nature of oppositional visions renders them automatically and immediately rejectable, thus making the audience favorably predisposed to speaker's privileged vision. As such, the speech unfolds according to Festinger's consistency principle (cf. 1.3.2), providing the speaker with a substantial credibility credit prior to enactment of his vision. At the same time, the coherence ploys used to set up the anti-thesis – thesis relation and the consistency sequence, such as cause-and-effect markers (viz. 'Following this schema'), play their part in neutralizing the operation of logico-rhetorical deception modules in the addressee (cf. 1.3.3).

In the course of time, L&J's anti-immigration discourse undergoes substantial radicalization, redefining its premises in increasingly fear-inducing, coercive terms. Originally an economic burden and a threat to national/cultural identity, in the second half of 2016 immigration is re-construed as an essentially physical threat affecting state security and thus also individual safety of Polish people. In the discourse of Kaczyński, Szydło, Waszczykowski, and others the threat element is invariably associated with issues of global terrorism and terrorist activity in Europe. The ability of the state to handle terrorist threat becomes, consequently, the main point of reference for political visions. As evidenced in (10), these visions involve a yet stronger distinction between oppositional and privileged futures:

- (10) Do we want to have districts where sharia law reigns? Where there are no-go zones for police. And where every few weeks something explodes. We could let them [immigrants] in, wait and hope that they integrate. This is precisely what Brussels and Stockholm have tried. And this is also what Nice has tried.⁴ Here in Poland, our predecessors⁵ were on track to commit the same mistakes as other Western

⁴ Mariusz Błaszczak makes this statement 3 days after an Islamic terrorist attack, in which a truck was deliberately driven into crowds celebrating Bastille Day on the Promenade des Anglais in Nice, France, killing 84 people and injuring 434.

⁵ The Civic Platform liberal party, ruling Poland between 2007-2015.

countries. But the new government sets the priorities right. This government knows that the safety of Polish citizens comes first. (Mariusz Błaszczak, July 17, 2016)

Coming from Minister of the Interior, these words have a particular appeal. In his argument, Mariusz Błaszczak outlines an oppositional future that involves continual presence of material threats to public safety, most notably an urgent terrorist threat. This vision derives its credibility from ideological and cultural premises which have been tested and endorsed in L&J's past argument on immigration (cf. ex. 9) and can now be taken for granted. Specifically, the massive number of migrants from Africa and the Middle East and their apparent inability to integrate in Europe (likely resulting in frustration and anger) are construed as a potential source of threat to local communities in European cities. This argument is further validated, in the current example, by a flashback vision of a terrorist attack in Nice, perpetrated by an Islamic immigrant. The oppositional vision includes, also, the absence of resources to handle the threat ('no-go zones for police', 'districts where sharia law reigns'), resulting – as can be understood – from the ultra-liberal policy on immigration and, altogether, excessively multiculturalist stance of the EU. The enactment of the oppositional vision in the text involves standard lexico-grammatical choices, such as interrogative mood ('Do we want?'), probabilistic modality ('could let them in'), and modality-evidential chunks expressing passivity and mental speculation ('wait and hope').

The oppositional future in Błaszczak's address is deftly followed by privileged future, which is a future based on rational judgement, learning from past experience ('This is ... what Brussels and Stockholm have tried. And this is also what Nice has tried') and, crucially, consistently following the ideological principles and values delineated in previous argument (cf. 9). According to these principles, 'the safety of Polish citizens comes first', which constitutes an irrefutable premise detracting from the obligation to follow the EU relocation agenda. The privileged future is thus not only a future of rational, 'patriotic' decisions on international arena, but also of a new kind of governance in general. This extra element of legitimization of L&J's political leadership is well visible in the speech ('our predecessors were on track to commit the same mistakes... But the new government sets the priorities right'). Linguistically, the performance of privileged future in the text involves the use of declarative mood, absolute modality and categorical, unmediated assertions expressing certainty, rather than belief ('knows', 'sets... right'). The triggers of rhetorical uptake are also no less salient than in Kaczyński's speech; the anti-thesis – thesis relation, deictic markers of coherence, etc. are all in place to enhance credibility and persuasion effects. Interestingly, looking at both examples from a consistency perspective, the texts reveal two kinds of consistency, which can be described as intra- and intertextual. Internally, the anti-thesis part of the argument facilitates, as we noted, the acceptance of the thesis part. Intertextually, on the other hand, argument such as in text (9), involving mostly ideological and cultural premises, facilitates the approval of potentially more controversial argument, such as in (10). This demonstrates that L&J's anti-

immigration rhetoric, exhibiting stable, recurrent lexical, structural and conceptual features (including construals of alternative futures) can be considered a genre of political discourse, at least legitimization discourse.

4. Conclusion

The concept of alternative futures possesses important implications for political discourse analysis and discourse studies in general. These implications can be described in theoretical, methodological, and critical analytical terms. From a theoretical perspective, alternative futures are an embodiment of the essentially dialogic nature of political communication, as well as a central conceptual feature of virtual dialogue underlying most of the apparently monologic forms of political discourse, such as speeches, statements, comments, etc. As such, alternative futures provide a useful methodological handle on several linguistic (and extra-linguistic) phenomena engaged in construals of privileged and oppositional visions. The latter include a structured presence of certain lexico-grammatical features, such as mood or modality types, as well as operation of credibility-building and persuasion mechanisms, including consistency and coherence displays. The conceptual framework of alternative futures assigns all these elements a specific place in analysis, setting up useful interdisciplinary connections. Finally, from a critical standpoint, analytical accounts of alternative futures in political discourse shed light on how actors engage with the core property of political communication, i.e. sharing visions about the future, to exert social coercion and thus further their goals. The ability to offer these insights makes alternative futures an essential part of the analytical toolkit in the study of political propaganda and manipulation.

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Constructing Privileged and Oppositional Future in Dialogic Political Speeches

Summary: This paper describes ways in which political speakers define and legitimize future policies by construing different policy options in terms of 'privileged' and 'oppositional' futures. Privileged and oppositional futures are conceptual projections of alternative policy visions occurring in quasi-dialogic chunks of speech, revealing specific evidential, mood, and modality patterns. Privileged future involves the speaker's preferred or at least acknowledged vision and is articulated through absolute modality and evidential markers which derive from factual evidence, history, and reason. Oppositional future involves an antagonistic and plainly threatening vision, expressed by probabilistic modality and usually interrogative mood. Following the principle of psychological consistency in belief, oppositional future is normally communicated first, allowing a swift and strong response from the privileged future expressed in the speaker-preferred vision.

Keywords: alternative futures; privileged future; oppositional future; virtual/hidden dialogue; consistency