Deconstructing Diplomacy: a Critical Analysis on the Strategic Use of Language by American Political Figures During the Vietnam War

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Abstract

Linguaggio e politica sono due facce indissolubili della stessa medaglia. Il linguaggio è forse l'unico strumento che abbiamo in quanto umani per descrivere la realtà che ci circonda. Il modo in cui si decide di incorniciare la realtà attraverso il linguaggio ha implicazioni materiali e tangibili, basti pensare alla necessità di definire la recente pandemia come "stato d'emergenza", o di definire il cambiamento climatico come "crisi globale" in maniera tale da evocare una risposta adeguata. Questa sua capacità di modellare il decorso degli eventi fa in modo che sia presente in ogni sfaccettatura della politica, diventandone costantemente parte attiva e costituente. Le relazioni internazionali, comunemente intese in senso ampio come lo studio delle origini e delle conseguenze di un mondo suddiviso in stati sovrani, sono governate dal linguaggio in quanto la comunicazione (in ogni sua forma) è inderogabilmente alla base di ogni democrazia. Da ciò consegue che ogni branchia delle relazioni internazionali, dalla diplomazia allo studio delle politiche estere di un determinato paese, sia basata allo stesso modo sul linguaggio. Cosa succede, però, quando il linguaggio in ambito politico viene usato in modo strategico?

La seguente tesi si pone come obiettivo quello di analizzare in modo estensivo il tortuoso rapporto tra uso del linguaggio e politica, e le conseguenti implicazioni che ne derivano a livello di potere e disuguaglianza quando questo uso è implementato coscientemente in modo strategico. Più specificatamente, sarà preso in esame il caso degli Stati Uniti durante la guerra del Vietnam, la cui diplomazia è sempre stata nel corso della loro storia particolarmente peculiare a livello strategico. La metodologia utilizzata si concentrerà sull'analisi di fonti primarie e dirette, ovvero discorsi pubblici pronunciati da ex presidenti durante il conflitto, così da poter constatare come gli eventi principali siano stati presentati alla popolazione. La tesi è stata suddivisa in tre capitoli principali che rappresentano tre fasi dello studio ugualmente fondamentali. Mentre il primo e il secondo capitolo si occuperanno di presentare il rapporto tra linguaggio e politica a livello prettamente teorico, il terzo capitolo entrerà nel vivo della praticità del problema, analizzando il caso della diplomazia pubblica attorno alla guerra del Vietnam con occhi valutativamente critici.

La convinzione che lo studio delle relazioni internazionali e della politica in generale potesse essere condotto attraverso un approccio multidisciplinare è

relativamente recente. In particolare, la linguistica ha iniziato a occuparsi in modo proficuo del rapporto tra politica e linguaggio solamente negli anni '70, quando una serie di esperti hanno cominciato a studiare nuovi approcci alla linguistica. Tra questi, Wodak, Fairclough e van Dijk sono considerati i fondatori di un nuovo e innovativo approccio comunemente conosciuto come "Analisi Critica del Discorso" (CDA), che si pone l'obiettivo di considerare il linguaggio come una pratica sociale da cui derivano, specialmente in politica, delle relazioni asimmetriche di potere, o delle ideologie, che vengono rinforzate e manifestate attraverso il linguaggio stesso. Ciò che lo rende un approccio innovativo è il fatto che non sia un semplice metodo d'analisi a livello linguistico, ma un approccio fondato sulla multidisciplinarità, e in quanto tale in continuo divenire.

La prima parte della tesi si occupa proprio di evidenziarne l'evoluzione e i principali approcci proposti dagli studiosi sopraccitati. Attraverso concetti che rimandano alla linguistica, alla filosofia, all'antropologia e alla psicologia cognitiva, è infatti possibile tracciare un chiaro collegamento tra politica e linguaggio, volto a comprendere come le ideologie possano essere instillate a livello comunicativo nelle persone, e quindi diventare difficili da scardinare. Non essendo un approccio puramente descrittivo, l'obiettivo del CDA diventa quello di spiegare e interpretare i fenomeni linguistici nelle loro valenze implicitamente politiche e strategiche. La diretta conseguenza di ciò è, nuovamente, che linguaggio e politica siano legati da un legame indissolubile e imprescindibile.

Questa tesi teorica iniziale, ovvero la base dell'intero lavoro, diventa ancora più chiara quando si procede a studiare ed analizzare il modo in cui le relazioni internazionali operano a livello pratico, e più in particolare diplomazia e negoziazioni internazionali. Il secondo capitolo si occupa infatti di presentare, sempre a livello teorico, il modo in cui la diplomazia opera, specialmente in tempi di guerra, e come le negoziazioni internazionali ne siano l'espressione pratica principale. Fondamentali per la conclusione del conflitto in Vietnam, infatti, sono stati gli Accordi di pace di Parigi nel 1973, raggiunti dopo lunghe negoziazioni condotte sia "pubblicamente" che in segreto. In particolare, le negoziazioni segrete, comunemente conosciute in termini scientifici come "backchannel negotiations", sono state cruciali per il raggiungimento di un accordo di pace, sebbene poco rispettato dalle parti nei primi anni successivi alla sua firma. Le backchannel negotiations, in quanto condotte in segreto, hanno come prerogativa quella di permettere alle parti di evitare di scontrarsi con l'opinione

pubblica, e quindi di poter incorrere in blocchi involontari dovuti a divergenze causate dalla necessità dei rappresentanti di non "deludere" la popolazione. Tuttavia, il problema permane una volta che l'accordo, quando raggiunto, deve essere comunicato alla popolazione, compito che nel caso della guerra in Vietnam è spettato al presidente repubblicano Richard Nixon.

La combinazione tra lo studio linguistico del CDA, e delle nozioni più comuni riguardo l'evoluzione della diplomazia e delle negoziazioni internazionali, ci permettono di spostarci verso il vivo del rapporto tra linguaggio e politica, che si concretizza in una serie di strategie retoriche identificabili in pressoché ogni discorso pubblico pronunciato da figure politiche importanti negli Stati Uniti. L'uso più o meno frequente di queste strategie retoriche permette di tracciare un *modus operandi* convenzionale negli Stati Uniti suddiviso in un approccio liberale e conservatore al discorso politico, valutato attraverso l'analisi critica di due discorsi di insediamento pronunciati da due presidenti di due ere differenti, ovvero Eisenhower e Obama. Questa suddivisione è prettamente convenzionale, in quanto spesso le strategie utilizzate da entrambe le parti si sovrappongono, e non cambiano nel tempo, come dimostrato dalla successiva ed ampia analisi della retorica che ha circondato la guerra del Vietnam.

Nonostante la strategia retorica della contrapposizione tra Ovest ed Est perfettamente spiegata in *Orientalism* di Edward Said sia stata spesso presente nell'approccio comunicativo degli Stati Uniti, quella principale e ricorrente utilizzata da rappresentanti politici degli Stati Uniti è la pratica comunemente conosciuta come "Othering", strettamente legata alla strategia del "Noi contro Loro". Questa si concretizza a livello comunicativo con la costante ripetizione di una suddivisione mai chiara tra "noi", in questo caso gli Americani, e "loro", dove loro non è mai chiaramente personificato, e quindi privato di ogni parvenza di umanità. Ne consegue una rappresentazione positiva del noi volta ad elogiarne i valori, che nel caso degli Stati Uniti ruotano attorno al controverso concetto di libertà, e una rappresentazione negativa del loro, che diventa quasi il cattivo di una favola da sconfiggere con tutte le proprie forze. Ovviamente, considerando il periodo della guerra in Vietnam, stiamo implicitamente parlando dell'Unione Sovietica e del periodo della Guerra Fredda tra quest'ultima e gli Stati Uniti, che di freddo ha tuttavia presentato ben poco. La rapida espansione del comunismo era infatti innegabilmente vista dai rappresentanti degli Stati Uniti come una minaccia che minava la legittimità degli Stati Uniti a livello

internazionale e globale, tanto che nei primi anni della Guerra Fredda è stata proposta una vera e propria dottrina del containment volta ad evitare il cosiddetto "effetto domino", ovvero una transizione graduale e globale verso forme di comunismo sovietico.

Nonostante la base della politica estera degli Stati Uniti in questo periodo, e quindi la decisione di intervenire in stati terzi fosse basata proprio su questo ed altri principi, a livello diplomatico e pubblico i discorsi ufficiali dei presidenti che hanno governato durante la guerra in Vietnam raramente ponevano l'accento su questo. Il terzo capitolo, infatti, si concentra proprio su un'analisi critica e pratica a livello cronologico dei discorsi alla popolazione pronunciati da ex presidenti in diversi punti salienti del conflitto. Il conflitto ha attraversato quattro presidenze, e in particolare quella di Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson e Nixon. Ciò che è emerso dall'analisi testuale e interpretativa dei loro discorsi riguardanti la guerra in Vietnam è un chiaro e costante rifugio nel concetto di "libertà". A livello comunicativo, la base concettuale su cui si basava il conflitto in Vietnam e la partecipazione degli Stati Uniti era infatti un tentativo di garantire la libertà di quel popolo che si trovava minacciata dall'influenza dell'Unione Sovietica. Il conflitto diventava quindi agli occhi degli Americani uno sforzo necessario e volto a proteggere i valori degli Stati Uniti in quanto leaders di un mondo libero.

Tuttavia, verso la seconda parte degli anni '60, le atrocità commesse in territorio vietnamita, e la ormai insopportabile oltranza del conflitto sono diventate evidenti anche all'opinione pubblica americana. Il '68 è considerato un anno famoso per la proliferazione di movimenti sociali globali che hanno portato a risultati storici per quanto riguarda il raggiungimento di diritti umani, per esempio. Tra il movimento femminista, quello per i diritti dei lavoratori, e quello per i diritti di persone gay, lesbiche, e trans, un movimento di studenti su scala gradualmente maggiore si è occupato di opporsi fermamente alla guerra in Vietnam, trovando anche il supporto di esponenti importanti di altri movimenti sociali, come Martin Luther King. Nonostante non ci sia evidenza storica del fatto che il movimento anti-guerra sia stato il motivo che ha spinto verso il raggiungimento di un accordo di pace per la guerra in Vietnam, è innegabile che la sua influenza sia stata di grande portata. Infatti, fu proprio Richard Nixon ad appellarsi nel 1969 alla "grande maggioranza silenziosa" che supportava la guerra, ben conscio del fatto che in realtà la maggioranza della popolazione spingeva per un immediato ritiro delle truppe.

Ciò che questa tesi, attraverso l'analisi di fonti primarie dirette durante un conflitto di tale portata ha contribuito ad analizzare è la consapevolezza che la guerra in Vietnam sia stata probabilmente la prima volta nella storia recente degli Stati Uniti in cui il fallimento di questi ultimi sia a livello militare, che diplomatico, è stato evidente agli occhi del mondo. Conseguentemente, è stato dimostrato come il continuo riferimento a valori di libertà e salvezza del mondo a livello di retorica americana che permane ancora oggi, sia in realtà fondato su un volubile paradosso, che diventa evidente se presa in considerazione la politica estera degli Stati Uniti fino ad oggi. Riconoscere ed interpretare un uso strategico del linguaggio e di parole che comunemente hanno un enorme peso per scopi politici diventa quindi un compito fondamentale, e che assume enorme rilevanza a livello internazionale. Inquadrare eventi storici, e in particolare conflitti, sotto la giusta luce è cruciale per capirne la valenza, che si può affermare con sicurezza raramente si incontri col concetto di libertà. Dopotutto, infatti, non è mai stato chiaro il significato attribuito dagli Stati Uniti al concetto di libertà, e a chi fosse riservato il privilegio di goderne.

Introduction

In recent years there have been growing discussions about the importance of language in any field, whether that be a more inclusive and neutral language, or an adequate description of global issues that we are currently facing as individual entities in a globalised world. In politics, language is the foreground of any discourse. There should be no denying that language and politics are strictly intertwined. They innately operate in dialectical fashion, and cannot thus be separated. As such, however, when other elements such as power relations or inequalities are added into the equation, this relationship may become a dangerous one. The aim of this dissertation is to critically evaluate how language can be used in a strategic way in any political discourse. More precisely, it focuses on how the ideological basis of the Vietnam War can be challenged from a linguistic and political point of view, based on how it was presented to the public by leading US political figures during those years.

Language is the way we decrypt reality, and it is safe to assert that there are hidden and underlying implications in political language that may shape the way we perceive historical events, and may even influence their natural course. In international relations, which is commonly defined as "the academic study of the origins and consequences (both empirical and normative) of a world divided among states", this becomes evident (Griffiths & O'Callaghan, 2002: *Preface VIII*). Since this is a broad definition, it entails the inclusion of a variety of sub-fields such as diplomacy, foreign policy, historical sociology, philosophy, and even linguistics, which is why political discourse is the main field in which linguistic and ideological biases can be identified.

One of the first steps in the analysis of any event pertaining to political discourse is framing the issue in object. For instance, framing climate change as a "global crisis" entails a set of responses to the issue that are in line with the gravity and scope of the issue. In international relations, framing means identifying the historical and socio-political context of the event, and its implications in the international arena. It is a conscious and calculated process, and as such it may be driven by ideological biases both during and after the event. Understanding how framing works, and evaluating the biases that play a crucial role in this process becomes thus fundamental, and is the reason why this topic gains international relevancy. Recent literature has indeed started to focus extensively on this topic by

adopting a multidisciplinary approach to the analysis of political events. Under this framework, in fact, new disciplines were created that provide a cross-examination of political events in order to highlight their underlying relevance and meanings.

Under the macro-field of linguistics, there is a new approach that was developed in the 1970s that is commonly referred to as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The first chapter will provide a theoretical overview of its aims and tenets, which are all centred around evaluating the hidden power relations that become evident in the dialectical relationship between language and politics. More specifically, in public political discourse there are a set of rhetorical tools that can be used strategically to frame issues under a specific light, which is the basis of the creation of every political speech. These are clearly outlined in the work of the main researchers of the doctrine, namely, Wodak, Fairclough, and van Dijk. Although they provide slightly different approaches to the doctrine in theoretical terms, their contributions merge to create a thorough overlook on how to proceed when analysing political discourse, which will be the theoretical basis for the practical analysis presented in the following chapters.

Since international relations as a concept entails the inclusion of a number of sub-categories, for the purpose of this dissertation diplomacy becomes the most relevant. In fact, the Vietnam War is remembered as the worst diplomatic failure in recent American history. The second chapter will thus present diplomacy from a theoretical point of view in a number of steps. Starting from what diplomacy is, and how it has evolved over time, the analysis will then move to evaluate public diplomacy, public opinion, and international negotiations, which are a fundamental part of the inner workings of international relations. They have in fact demonstrated to be fundamental in a great number of historical events as elements that influence the course of events. In particular, public opinion and international negotiations conducted in secrecy (commonly known as Track Two Diplomacy or backchannel negotiations) during the Vietnam War between the United States and North Vietnam were crucial to eventually bring an end to a 20-year conflict.

The second part of the chapter will instead attempt to link the theoretical overview presented on CDA and political discourse to the concepts pertaining primarily to the theory of international relations, in order to understand how the dialectical relationship between the two is built and operates. This will lead to the recognition of a set of strategic rhetorical tools or strategies that are commonly used

in political discourse, and that will be recurring in the following practical analysis, such as Othering, the Us versus Them dichotomy, or the East and West juxtaposition. With the proposition of a critical analysis of two inaugural addresses by American presidents from two different eras and political parties, it will become clear that the strategies used in political language to influence public opinion have practically always been the same, which is what allows us to easily recognise them. This will mark the shift to the more practical approach to the topic in exam, which is the case study analysed in this dissertation.

The Vietnam War was one of the greatest examples in history of how wrong or distorted perceptions may lead to devastating consequences. It allows an analysis of all the elements that are currently typical of international relations, from international negotiations, to public opinion, to strategic use of language in public speeches about the war, and so forth. Although the historical dimension of the conflict will not be the main focus of this dissertation, a brief overview of its main events will be presented in order to clearly outline the socio-historical and political context of the war, which is the first step in any critical analysis aimed at evaluating strategic political speeches. In addition, an evaluation will be presented on how the parties conducted the international negotiations commonly known as Paris Peace Talks that marked the end of the conflict in 1975. The theoretical overview of the first two chapters, combined with the socio-historical and political introduction to the case study of the third chapter will allow us to enter the world of the public political discourse surrounding the Vietnam War.

The Vietnam War fully crossed four American presidencies, from Eisenhower to Kennedy, and from Johnson to Nixon. The context in which it happened is that of the Cold War, which was indeed a period full of ideological biases that became manifest through public speeches. What this means is that at different points during the conflict these presidents have strategically addressed the nation to explain why the conflict was pursued, and why it was still ongoing after years. The practical and critical analysis will proceed chronologically in relation with the main events of the conflict, and will attempt at explaining ideological biases manifested through language in American policy during those years. More specifically, select speeches for each presidency will be taken into exam and analysed in their hidden meanings and implications for the time period in which they were produced. What is more, a final brief evaluation will be theorised on how the Vietnam War was engraved in the

collective memory of American history, in order to provide a further element towards the thorough understanding of linguistic and political biases.

The literature used to write this dissertation is composed of the works by experts both in linguistic and political studies. Primary and direct sources such as political speeches and historical documents will also be included and thoroughly analysed. At the international level, a contribution to the recent studies on the strategic use of political language becomes relevant as it should be the starting point of any endeavour pertaining the analysis of international relations and the relationship between states or leading political figures, especially in a newly globalised world governed by social media and fast communication in which fake news and ideologies are so easy to spread. Finally, in fact, what this dissertation aims at achieving through the analysis of one of the worst failures in recent American history is a glimpse on the paradoxes and biases that have always governed American political discourse, all of which still remain strongly today.

1. <u>Critical Discourse Analysis: An Innovative Approach to Political Discourse</u>

The following chapter will focus on an innovative approach to linguistics that focuses on identifying the underlying and hidden meanings found in discourse production concerning power struggles, inequalities, and so forth, that is, Critical Discourse Analysis. This section will present the doctrine from a completely theoretical point of view, starting from its main principles. Then, it will focus on the evolution of the doctrine and the diverse approaches that key experts take in exercising it. Finally, it will present the clear and innate relationship between Critical Discourse Analysis and political discourse, which is the basic theoretical ground for this dissertation. The aim of this chapter is to lay the theoretical linguistic grounds for the detailed analysis of the case study that I will present in the following chapters, namely, the Vietnam War.

1.1 What is Critical Discourse Analysis?

For last year's words belong to last year's language /
And next year's words await another voice. (Eliot, 1963: 204)

Language has always been and still is the *modus operandi* through which we interpret facts and events. As history continued flourishing, language has extensively developed and changed, so much so that words are always gaining new meanings, and communication has become multifaceted, especially with the fairly recent appearance of new media. Certainly, pertaining to the realm of language are not only words and concepts, but signs, body language, face expressions, pauses, and silence, too. Language is in fact a never-ending universe, which is why a great number of disciplines were created to analyse it, ranging from sociology, to psychology, to anthropology, to linguistics, and so forth.

      If it is a given fact that events shape the ever-changing nature of language, then it is safe to say that the reverse happens too. Focusing on the subject of politics especially, language plays a crucial role in framing issues under a specific light, and thus creating the grounds for the events to unfold in any way wanted. This is the basis of what is commonly known as diplomacy, which is the pillar of international politics,

through which events or disputes of political nature are influenced and settled. However, what happens when language is 'politicised', and used to voluntarily influence the natural progression of international events?

If language can influence the international system's functioning, that means that there exist societal and political power asymmetries that can be reinforced through language itself. Language thus becomes a form of social practice, which is what sociolinguistics aims at investigating. Under the umbrella of sociolinguistics there is a specific doctrine that was born in the 1970s, in a time in which linguistics was not that invested in social hierarchy and power imbalances, even though it was a historical period in which (through the Cold War and decolonisation, for instance) the struggle for power was prominent. This is commonly referred to as Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA), and is a further extension of the discipline of discourse analysis, which aims at interpreting any form of semiotic event in its clear and underlying meanings. As to understand what the relevance of CDA is, it is necessary to focus on some definitions, on the main arguments and evolution of the discipline, and on how it can influence the current political discourse.

1.1.1. Some Definitions

Critical Discourse Analysis could be defined as an innovative methical approach to the discipline of sociolinguistics, drawing from social and linguistic theory. Research on the topic was first conducted by scholars such as Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak and Teun A. van Dijk, who extensively analysed the relationship between ideology and language.

In order to understand what CDA means it is important to reference the work of scholars who have dedicated their lives to the discipline, even among the numerous changes that the discipline itself has been subjected to over the years. Focusing on the etymology of the name of the discipline, Norman Fairclough (2010: 4) defines CDA as such:

> It is not analysis of discourse 'in itself' as one might take it to be, but analysis of dialectical relations between discourse and other objects, elements or moments, as well as analysis of the 'internal relations' of discourse. And since analysis of such relations cuts across conventional boundaries between disciplines (linguistics,

politics, sociology and so forth), CDA is an interdisciplinary form of analysis, or as I shall prefer to call it a transdisciplinary form.

In fact, 'critical' entails the presence of a critique in the appliance of the doctrine, that is, it focuses on the gap between how negative aspects of a society are perpetuated and how they can be changed for the better. It concerns 'discourse', that is of course never unilateral, but dialectical, meaning that it entails a relationship between discourse and other elements – society, ideology, power. Finally, 'analysis' because it is a theory with a specific practical appliance encompassing a great number of theories, which is what makes it transdisciplinary.

Similarly, Ruth Wodak (2001: 2) defines CDA as:

[…] Thus, CL and CDA may be defined as fundamentally concerned with analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language. In other words, CDA aims to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, signalled, constituted, legitimized and so on by language use (or in discourse).

It is important to highlight that under the critical discourse analysis approach language is not passive, meaning that it is not only a way of communication, but it can and should be seen as a medium of domination that can legitimise the existence of social and power inequalities. If the existence of such inequalities is structural, that means that the doctrine cannot overlook concepts which become thus fundamental for the analysis itself.

Wodak (2001: 3) identifies these three concepts as: power, history, and ideology. The first one refers to the fact that each type of discourse is shaped by dominance, that means, it is inevitably produced under a certain space and time (and pressure of any kind). These 'influences' are certainly historical, meaning they depend on the historical conditions of the period in time in which the discourse is produced. Finally, every discourse depends on ideology, which gives it an obscure and underlying meaning that should be considered. These are the reasons why CDA usually focuses on topics and issues that are rich in ideology, historical conditions, and powerstruggles, such as gender issues, racism, identity research or media discourses.

To complete this overview on how CDA is defined, Teun A. van Dijk (2008: 85) asserts:

> Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take explicit position and thus want to understand, expose and ultimately resist social inequality.

What this definition adds to the previous one is the idea that CDA was born as a form of social resistance, which is important as to understand how it operates. In fact, it was born in the 1960s and 1970s as a true reactionary form against the prominent paradigms that may often be considered as 'acritical' or 'asocial'. What is innovative about the doctrine is the proposition of a new way of theorising, analysing, and applying that takes into consideration the unavoidable relationship betweenscholarship and society. Contrarily to the past, this opened for new approaches to science and science-related theoretical doctrines which do not ignore such relationship,but instead aim at studying it in all its facets.

As to further understand what the relevance of CDA is, it is necessary to consider its tenets and main focal points, as described by the main experts on the subject.

1.2 The Main Theoretical Tenets of Critical Discourse Analysis

Although it is a fairly recent doctrine, CDA needs to meet specific requirements in order to effectively reach its aims. Since it is not a proper direction of research, but a new way of perceiving language in all its implications, CDA might not present a unitary theoretical framework. There are however certain cornerstones that are common to CDA in all its declinations, and that frame the doctrine under a highly specific light. Fairclough and Wodak provide a clear overview of its main tenets in a systematic and coherent way.

First and foremost, CDA focuses primarily on social problems and political issues. This means that the interest of CDA is not in the current fashions of the world, but in issues that are systematic and pertain to the socio-political realm. This entails that rather than merely analysing discourse from a discursive point of view, CDA tries

to explain it in terms of social structure and power. In addition, the precondition is the strong belief that language is not an external product of society, but a huge part of it. This does not mean that language is not influenced by society; it is in fact undoubtedly conditioned by non-linguistic societal processes, but it highlights the dialectical connection between society and language. All linguistic phenomena are social in the sense that no discourse, whether it be written or spoken, is produced without a social setting or without pressure from societal conventions of any kind. At the same time, most social phenomena are linguistic in the sense that discourse production in a specific social setting is not merely a product of that setting, but is an active part of it. So, the takeaway of this premise is that language and society are not symmetrical, but are grounded on a dialectical and often complex relationship (Fairclough, 2013).

In fact, the second tenet of CDA is the concept that power relations are discursive. As Wodak states (2001: 3):

> Taking into account the insights that discourse is structured by dominance; that every discourse is historically produced and interpreted, that is, it is situated in time and space; and that dominance structures are legitimated by ideologies of powerful groups, the complex approach advocated by proponents of CL and CDA makes it possible to analyse pressures from above and possibilities of resistance to unequal power relationships that appear as societal conventions.

Under this view, language becomes a powerful social practice that has been able through dominance structures and ideologies of groups to instil in our societies unequal power structures that have by now become social conventions difficult to dismantle. Consequently, CDA represents one form of innovative scientific resistance that aims at deconstructing all these societal inequalities that can be validated and manifest through language. In fact, although implicit in this quote from Ruth Wodak, it is important to underline that for CDA and its scholars, discourse gradually constitutes society and culture, it can perpetuate ideological work, and it is historical.

As a result, it is safe to distinguish between language at a micro level, and at a macro level. Verbal interactions, communication, use of words, sentence structures all belong to the micro level of discourse. The macro level instead is constituted by power, dominance and inequality between social groups that become manifest through the micro level. For instance, a homophobic speech in a parliament may remain only a

discourse in a specific social context, or it could translate into a homophobic legislation that affects society in its values at the macro level. What CDA aims to achieve is creating a bridge between the micro and the macro level in order to provide a unified critical analysis of the discourse in exam, so that a systematic solution to the issue in object can become clearer. In order to effectively bridge the micro and macro levels of discourse, CDA cannot overlook certain elements that open the door for a more specific analysis of the pivotal points of the doctrine.

The third precondition of CDA can thus be divided into small pieces that create the complex puzzle of political discourse. First, as discourse is seen by CDA in its social implications, those who use language in a strategic way engage in discourse as members of specific social groups or institutions, not as individuals. Similarly, as discourse translates into action at the macro level, individual acts represent the ideology of specific groups or institutions, which is what gives a systematic dimension to issues of inequality. In addition, situations of communication both constitute and are constituted by the social context in which they happen. This means that, for instance, a message conveyed through a press conference by an American president may need to respect certain linguistic and formal constraints that would not exist if the same message was conveyed under another context. This becomes clearer when analysing debates, which are a form of discourse that follow specific formal and linguistic rules. Lastly, an analysis of language use cannot exclude the personal and collective cognition of the individual, that is, memories, opinions, or personal ideas, which all influence how the discourse is delivered (van Dijk, 2008).

As a fourth tenet of the doctrine, since language and power are interwoven in CDA, the concept of power needs further clarification. According to Teun A. van Dijk (2008: 88-93), power should be seen as the social power of groups or institutions, which is a concept that is strictly linked to control. More control means more power over members of another social group, and it can be of various types. Of course, power and control can be coercive, meaning they can depend on the use of force. However, for the purposes of Critical Discourse Analysis, this is not the type of power and control considered, as the use of violence annihilates the dialectical relationship between language and power by reducing it to a unilateral imposition.

The power and control that CDA focuses on is instead ideological. Rather than on force, it may depend on money, knowledge, social class, geographical position in the world and so forth. This type of power should not be necessarily seen as a direct

form of abuse where there is an apparent oppressor against the oppressed, but it may be enforced through ordinary actions, or ordinary discourse. A prime example is the realm of inequalities that poison societies and are fertile land for the targets of CDA, such as sexism, racism, and classism. In addition, having access to realms of discourse that can influence public opinion such as politics, media, and legislation is in itself an expression of power that can lead to control over people.

As to provide a simplistic idea of the relationship between power and language, we can start by the given fact that one's actions depend on one's thoughts. So, if it is possible to control in any way one's thoughts through the strategic use of language, then it may be easier to control their actions too. An ordinary individual may have control over discourse with people surrounding them, and may be subjected at the same time to their discourses too. However, those who belong to more powerful groups gain control over bigger spheres of influence (context). For instance, a teacher may have control over the educational discourse, while a journalist may have control over the media discourse.

The control that CDA aims at analysing is the one that derives from the influence of the collective, thus public opinion. Those who hold control over more spheres of influence, are subsequently and for definition more powerful from a social point of view. Aside from context, control over discourse is also constituted by the structures of language, that is, topic, semantic structures, style, cultural conventions, and details, which create a situation of control at the micro level. As van. Dijk (2008: 93) writes:

> If dominant groups, and especially their elites, largely control public discourse and its structures, they thus also have more control over the minds of the public at large. However, such control has its limits. The complexity of comprehension, and the formation and change of beliefs, is such that one cannot always predict which features of a specific text or talk will have which effects on the minds of specific recipients.

In fact, the reason why CDA is a difficult craft to master is the fact that language is not static, it continuously changes in its meanings and declinations. Language is a troubled journey into the human mind. The functioning of the human brain is likewiseextremely complex, which leads to CDA having to resort to numerous other disciplinessuch as psychology and anthropology to fully satisfy its aims. Linked to the concept

of power and control is the idea of hegemony, which will be fundamental to explain the mechanism used by American political figures during the Vietnam War in the next chapters. As Fairclough (2010: 61) states:

> Hegemony is leadership as well as domination across the economic, political, cultural and ideological domains of a society. Hegemony is the power over society as a whole of one of the fundamental economically defined classes in alliance (as a bloc) with other social forces, but it is never achieved more than partially and temporarily, as an 'unstable equilibrium'.

Hegemony is an extension and an extremism of the concept of power/control. Historically, it was firstly introduced and studied as a concept with Lenin and Gramsci's analysis of Western capitalism. It is basically a translation into practice of ideology, which once again is linked to language and political discourse. Hegemony finds fertile ground in the construction of alliances, which should be intended not in their traditional meanings, but as relationships between actors of any kind (teacher-student, family, institutions-civilians) that create what is commonly known as civil society. These relationships are naturally grounded in situations of domination of one party over the subordination of another which leads to what could be defined as hegemonic struggle.

Under this view political discourse and language are only a facet of hegemonic struggle which serve the purpose of perpetually reinstalling and reinforcing the hegemonic order in place at that time. If the hegemonic order starts to derail, then this is the mechanism on which extremist dictatorships such as Nazism and Fascism were based upon. It is not a coincidence that the strategic use of language and discourse through propaganda was that pounding and incessant during those times.

In fact, what language provides is a process of an often-unnoticeable legitimisation of reality that pushes certain ideologies to crystallisation and consequently prevents their deconstruction. One way of easing this process is innovation in discoursal events that purposefully contrasts the existing conventions and constraints previously described, which is what CDA aims at achieving.

A prime example of this would be the current ongoing debate in Italy concerning a more gender-inclusive language using a neutral instead of the masculine form of words through the use of the schwa. The use of the feminine of certain nouns indicating

professions in the Italian language is likewise highly debated. As theoretically outlined above, this is often seen as a threat to language integrity that would erase hundreds of years of linguistic development. Although the debate around the introduction of new ways to push language to be more inclusive may be interesting, linguistics often finds little place in the discussion. The debate instead derails and shifts towards a ridicule of the proposals as 'politically correct', which shows exactly what happens when certain crystallised norms (also linguistic) in the current hegemonic order are remotely doubted.

Lastly, as the fifth tenet of CDA it is important to evaluate how the doctrine operates from a practical point of view. After understanding the concept of language as a social practice, the dialectical relationship between language and society, and its implications in discourses concerning power and control that lead to hegemonic orders, how does CDA operate practically?

Norman Fairclough (2013: 91-117) provides a procedure that he defines as a 'beginner's guide' and not a 'blueprint' to translate into practice the theoretical key points of Critical Discourse Analysis. The procedure is applicable mainly to texts, but verbal communication is not excluded, as in most cases a formal speech by a political figure for example still derives from a pre-written text. The starting point is a set of questions that can be compartmentalised into three macro categories, which are vocabulary, grammar, and textual structure.

Concerning vocabulary, the focus is on the experiential, relational and expressive values of words. The experiential value of vocabulary signifies the way the writer or speaker decides to express ideological principles in the representation of society through the choice of a particular word over another. For instance, the current mandate on the use of masks to prevent the spread of Covid-19 may be described either as 'sanitary dictatorship' or as a 'voluntary act of solidarity for weaker individuals.' If used in a text or a speech, these choices of vocabulary immediately set the tone for their ideological premise, already instilling in the recipient a contextual idea of the framing of the discourse. In addition, there are words such as 'Fascism' or 'Nazism' which already hold an ideological preconception in their meaning. Another sign of ideological basis may be overwording, that is, using an unusual number of words to describe the same concept through the use of synonyms or antonyms as to emphasise it.

Relational value refers to how the choice of vocabulary influences or sets the relationship between participants in the discourse. A clear example would be the use of vocabulary pertaining to the realm of medicine, which may suggest that both the speakers and the listeners belong that contextual realm. In politics, a prime example of this which will be analysed more deeply in the next chapters would be when political figures address the general population. The use of words such as 'middle class' or 'working class' creates a situation of familiarity between speaker and listener, notwithstanding the formal setting of the speech. Formality is in fact a great indicator of the relational value of vocabulary: a formal setting demands a more formal vocabulary.

Finally, the expressive value of words represents the aim of the speakers when they convey a message, which can be implicit or explicit. Persuasive language is a huge part of the expressive value of words which is of great interest for CDA, as it shows the underlying will of the speaker to persuade or influence the opinion of listeners. Typical of the expressive value of vocabulary is the use of metaphors, which is a way of describing events under another light in order to positively or negatively frame them. For instance, a common metaphor during the Cold War years was the association by American representatives of the expansion of the Soviet Union with a 'disease that needs to be stopped', which is a clear attempt to frame their adversaries under a negative light. Metaphors such as association of events to illnesses still remain today, and have also become instantly recognisable among listeners as they gained familiarity with them.

Experiential, relational, and expressive value can be applied also to the second realm of discourse which is grammar. In this case, the focus is on the strategic use of grammatical structures to evoke a specific sentiment on recipients of the discourse. For the purpose of a practical critical analysis of discourse only the most significant portion of grammatical structures will be considered here. Firstly, sentence structure is pivotal to understand the ideological premise of a discourse. For instance, the speaker may choose to leave subject and agency of an event unclear through the strategic use of nominalisation (a process converted into noun) as to avoid responsibility, which is again what usually happens in political discourse. The same can be achieved through the conscious choice of a passive structure rather than an active one, which again leaves subject and agency undefined. The use of a negative sentence rather than a

positive may also indicate a clear intention of the speaker to frame the event under a specific light.

Concerning relational value, picking a declarative sentence or a question over an imperative is a clear indicator of the authority and power both of the speakers and of the listeners. The frequent use of modal verbs such as should and must denote, respectively, an advice and an obligation, which is an effective way of instantly framing an authoritative or less authoritative relationship between participants. In newspapers and media discourses the focus is instead usually on the use of non-modal forms and of the present tense, especially in titles, as to provide a view of the world or the event that is transparent and needs no interpretation by the receiver. To provide a practical example in current times, if an author entitles an article 'Russia invades Ukraine', then this is presented as a given fact and it subconsciously pushes the same conviction on the reader, which may have felt differently if the article was entitled 'Ukraine may have been invaded by Russia'.

The same ideological interest behind a discourse can become manifest through the use of connectors and especially logical connectors, which can create ideological connections and assumptions between sentences that are presented as givenAs language is analysed under every aspect with CDA, the dialectical relationship between power and discourse becomes evident, even though often implicit in the discourse itself.

One of the most interesting strategies used in political discourse is the use of the pronouns we and you. The use of the so-called 'inclusive we' is often used in political speeches to instantly establish a situation of familiarity and unity between participants in the discourse. When the Prime Ministers of any country address their citizens, they are never excluded from the narrative, which is a strategy that is typical when a country is undergoing war. For instance, as the current President of Ukraine is demonstrating, showing himself and speaking of himself as not just a watcher but a participant in the Russia-Ukraine war intends to create trust and familiarity between him and Ukrainians.

The last realm of discourse that should be considered is textual structure. Textual structure comprehends all aspects that concern the construction and presentation of a discourse. When producing a discourse there are always interactional conventions being used that depend on the level of formality of the situation, as they inherently belong to discourse itself. What is more, inequality between participants in a discourse may determine a different approach by them to the communicative situation. If one of

the participants is more powerful, they may control how the discourse evolves, when other participants should be interrupted, how long they should speak, and so forth. Once again, the power-discourse relation is evident. Finally, it is important to consider the scale of the discourse. Producing a text for a local newspaper undoubtedly differs from producing a speech in front of the Congress of the United States.

To sum up, language and discourse production are characterised by a great number of levels and sublevels that all need equal attention if there is the attempt of providing a conscious analysis. What should remain as a theoretical pillar throughout this dissertation is the premise that language is as much a product of society as a producer of it. Not only is language an active part of society, but it also creates a web of power-related asymmetries between individuals that often translates into control, and dangerous action, as the tenets of CDA demonstrate.

In order to provide a careful evaluation of discourse, the latter needs to consider each and every aspect of discourse, from choice of vocabulary to grammar structures, to contextual situation, to individuality of the producer, and so forth, which is what CDA aims at capturing. Since this innovative approach was firstly popularised in the 1970s, it is pertinent to deliver a brief overview on the evolution of the doctrine, so as to add yet another layer to the understanding of its inner workings.

1.3 The Evolution of Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) started as a branch of a discipline called Discourse Analysis (DA) during the 1970s. The main difference between the two lies in their respective aims: DA tried to find a connection between language and a limited sense of context, while CDA introduced a new dimension to the relationship, that is, ideology. What led the pioneers of this innovative research approach towards a more inclusive methodological way of conceiving language and linguistics is the undeniable shift in the way humans started to perceive the world.

From the 1500s to especially the 1700s and then the 1900s there was a dramatic shift towards a more rational approach to modern sciences that led to the way we have intended them in recent years. In this sense, there was a clear separation between three branches of knowledge: scientific knowledge, common sense, and humanities (Weiss & Wodak, 2001). Scientific knowledge was the only branch of knowledge that was seen as thoroughly reflecting rationality, while the other two were seen as non-

scientific. This pushed science towards observing reality as too complex to be comprehended by the human mind, thus confining knowledge only to certain areas of research. This perception changed again in the 20th century with the introduction of ground-breaking theories such as the theory of relativity by Einstein that completely revolutionised the concept of knowledge.

Knowledge thus shifted towards a more multidisciplinary approach, which is the framework under which CDA was born in the 1970s. Linguistics and general language studies started incorporating new doctrines that were flourishing at the time such as anthropology, psychology, and in general social studies in their research. The reason why CDA apparently presents itself as a fragmented discipline with no unitary approach is that it is not intended to be a monolithic subject. The heterogeneous roots of CDA are what characterises this new approach, and what allowed for researchers from all disciplines to develop their personal theories concerning CDA.

The only common ground among all theories of CDA is a new conception of language. With the development of CDA and a new multidisciplinary approach language started to be conceived as a communicative event that is less deterministic, that is, more open to probability. What this means is that in producing discourse there is a set of interconnections that happens between language and other elements such as social context, level of formality, participants, and so forth, which is never the same. If language is a matter of probability, then it becomes open not only to analysis, but also to interpretation, which is the main premise of CDA.

By proceeding chronologically, van Dijk provides a progressive evolution of CDA that could be divided into four different stages and approaches: Critical Linguistics, the Socio-cultural approach by Norman Fairclough, the Discourse-historical approach by Ruth Wodak, and finally the Socio-cognitive approach of Teun. A. van Dijk.

1.3.1. Critical Linguistics

The concept of language that is the basis of Critical Discourse Analysis, that is, a tool that is able to disguise ideological discourses through vocabulary, grammar or structure derives directly from what is usually considered the starting point of the doctrine, Critical Linguistics (CL). Roger Fowler is one of the main exponents of this

approach, and in his publications, he provides a definition of CL that is strictly related to the premise of CDA. As Fowler (1991: 66) states:

> Critical linguistics seeks, by studying the minute details of linguistic structure in the light of the social and historical situation of the text, to display to consciousness the patterns of belief and value which are encoded in the language - and which are below the threshold of notice for anyone who accepts the discourse as 'natural'.

While his publications later focused on the way the media discourse is constructed and filled with ideological significance, as a true linguist he considered any aspect of language as being able to carry ideological meaning. As a result, every facet of language from lexis, to syntax, to phonology even can hide ideological meaning behind it.

Accepting any discourse as natural is the easier route, as stripping individuals of socio-cultural constructs that have solidified over centuries is not only hard, but often unwanted. In fact, language is often seen as mere language. What this means is that language is often viewed as something that is independent by action, and thus cannot influence reality. The conceptual addition that CDA provided in relation to CL is that language is not only a result of society, but also an active part of it. Consequently, language in all its facets holds by definition socio-cultural and ideological meanings that can and will lead to social change. This is the basis of Norman Fairclough's Socio-cultural approach to CDA.

1.3.2. The Socio-cultural Approach by Norman Fairclough

Norman Fairclough is one of the strongest believers in the possibility for discourse to be a catalyst for social change. Based on the theories advances by Critical Linguistics and on the work of important historians such as Michel Foucault, Marx, Gramsci, and so forth, Fairclough furthered the idea of language as social practice.

On the one hand, discourse is socially structured at all levels, meaning that variables such as context, formality, social conventions and more undeniably shape it. On the other hand, language is socially constitutive. This means that language is influenced by all societal elements, but it is also the catalyst of their creation and

modification. Discourse is thus a practice used both to describe the world and to signify the world, that is, to construct it.

Fairclough identifies three ways in which discourse can contribute to the construction of reality: social identity, social relations, and systems of knowledge and belief. Firstly, language contributes to the way in which social identities of individuals are organised; secondly, to the way in which social relationships between individuals are established (and can lead to power inequalities), and lastly, to the way discourse can create systems of belief and knowledge that signify the world and its events (Fairclough, 1993).

What should be stressed is that even though language is by definition socially constituted, this does not mean that it is a regular, mechanical, or monolithic process. In fact, considering the link between discourse and society as a dialectical relationship implies that there is an element of balance between the two in discourse production that varies towards one or the other based on circumstances. To clarify what this means, Fairclough provides a three-dimensional conception of discourse.

First and foremost, discourse is anything that involves the use of language, from written to spoken, which Fairclough conventionally calls 'text'. In text production there are several elements that can be analysed in order to understand its meanings, which are vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and text structure. Vocabulary is the choice of individual words; grammar represents how words are linked together in sentences; cohesion indicates how sentences are organised together, and lastly, text structure highlights the larger organisational framework of a text.

The second dimension of discourse is discursive practice. Discursive practice contains text production, consumption, and distribution and it involves an analysis on how these can vary and based on social factors. For instance, producing text for a political speech requires a different level of attention than producing text for a local newspaper. In the same way, consuming an official administrative document entails more attention than consuming news in social media. In addition, distribution of an academic book is highly different than a casual conversation between friends that is confined to a moment in time.

The third and last dimension of discourse is discourse as social practice. Discourse and social practice concern the way written or spoken text and discursive practice are influenced by the wider context in which they are produced, which is society.

As Fairclough (2010: 94) states:

> The connection between text and social practice is seen as being mediated by discourse practice: on the one hand, processes of text production and interpretation are shaped by (and help shape) the nature of the social practice, and on the other hand the production process shapes (and leaves 'traces' in) the text, and the interpretative process operates upon 'cues' in the text.

It is in the moment in which text production, discursive practice and social practice start to merge that already analysed concepts such as ideology, power struggle, and hegemony enter the conversation and become the heart of CDA.

The innovative conception of language as an active part of social practice, and of the relationship between the two as dialectical is what paved the way for more theories to be developed in the following years. One of the most influential is the Discourse-Historical approach by Ruth Wodak.

1.3.3. The Discourse-Historical Approach by Ruth Wodak

The discourse-historical approach proposed by Ruth Wodak was born after the observation more in recent years of the effects of globalisation, new neo-liberalist economies and an apparent shift towards nationalism and xenophobia. According to her, what is needed to explain these complicated new events is a model that provides a multicausal and interdisciplinary approach, which is why she states that "the discourse-historical approach, committed to CDA, adheres to the socio-philosophical orientation of critical theory." (Wodak, 2001: 64)

The discourse-historical approach is based on three principles. Firstly, CDA aims at unveiling contradictions, ideological dilemmas or latent paradoxes that are internal and pertinent to discourse/text production. Then, similar to Fairclough's theory, a social critique that requires the use of social theory is needed to reveal the possible manipulative nature of the discursive practice. Finally, a new step proposed by Wodak happens after the analytical process, and concerns propositions on how to improve communication and discourse production as to avoid such biases.

As Wodak(2001: 65) concludes:

> In investigating historical, organizational and political topics and texts, the discourse-historical approach attempts to integrate a large quantity of available knowledge about the historical sources and the background of the social and political fields in which discursive `events' are embedded. Further, it analyses the historical dimension of discursive actions by exploring the ways in which particular genres of discourse are subject to diachronic change.

In addition, the discourse-historical approach was conceived as a way to explain anti-Semitic political discourses during the 1980s. In fact, the focus of the theory is on political and discriminatory discourses, the reason being that they are inherently the most dangerous, and the richest in biases and latent prejudices manifested through language. Although CDA is a critical doctrine, it does not aim at exhausting a judicial role and declare what is right and what is wrong. It aims instead at providing the most appropriate interpretation of specific discourses in specific settings, and study how these can influence our socio-cultural reality. In interpreting discourse production, linguists and historians cannot neglect the individuality and unique mentality of each person, which is what Van Dijk's Socio-cognitive approach proposes.

1.3.4. The Socio-cognitive Approach by Teun A. van Dijk

Van Dijk was able to propose a model that is complete and considers every aspect involved in discourse production and interpretation, hence this is why it could be listed as one of the main tenets of CDA. The socio-cognitive model by van Dijk is based on the premise that cognition mediates between 'society' and 'discourse' through knowledge.

The starting point of this approach is the way knowledge should be perceived in relation to discourse reception and interpretation. Under this perspective knowledge should not be perceived as absolute or generic, as it depends on a great number of factors that cannot be overlooked. Absolute knowledge may exist, but should be seen, for instance, through the eyes of the paradox of the truth that has characterised philosophical studies for centuries. In fact, absolute truth may exist, but there also exist versions of the truth that we develop that might not align with the so-called 'absolute truth'.

In the same way, there exists absolute knowledge, yet the way individuals buildtheir knowledge is extremely personal, as it is influenced by several factors. Context, social conditions, memories, mental models are all elements that voluntarily orinvoluntarily contribute to our formation of knowledge, which is why social cognitive theories become fundamental for this approach. Both long-term and short-term memories, and also mental models that have solidified in our individuality shape our reception of discursive practices, and can lead to the formation of stereotypes or ideologies if these mental models are too solid.

As a result, if cognition influences our reception of discourse practices, then it inevitably influences discourse production, too. To understand how this happens, van Dijk proposes a micro and macro level of discourse production and reception. The micro-level involves all elements that pertain to language (vocabulary, grammar, clauses), while the macro-level pertains to all the macrostructures that influence the micro-level, such as context, culture, personal knowledge, power establishment, power inequalities and so forth. For instance, concerning culture, one's personal knowledge may be influenced by a system of shared beliefs that are typical of one specific culture and are difficult to disregard. The relationship between the two levels is once again dialectical and inescapable, and the aim of CDA is that of wedding these two dimensions in all their declinations as to understand what they entail. Under this perspective discourse analysis becomes the unavoidable combination of a copious amount of doctrines such as anthropology, cognitive science, philosophy, linguistics and so forth.

The interest for CDA is that of observing how social power (intended as means to control other individual's minds and actions through discourse) operates and leads to the formation of ideologies (van Dijk, 2014). This is the reason why politics is one of the main fields of interest for CDA. Politics is in fact innately characterised by all the elements explained above, and it is a fertile ground for unveiling ideologies and power inequalities, as they are often only observable through political discourse analysis in itself.

1.4 Critical Discourse Analysis and Political Discourse

Politics and political discourse are one of the main fields of interest for CDA, as they are almost entirely based on cognitive foundations, and linguistic strategies. What we

as individuals strongly believe about politics in general is acquired and shaped by what we receive through conversations with other individuals, the media, education, which are all declinations of text and discourse production. Referring again to the socio-cognitive approach by van Dijk, in order for a discourse to be considered political, however, there needs to be a connection between language at the micro-level, and a larger context at the macro-level that can be related to political structures and properties that involve one's individuality. For instance, a racist discourse in politics may result from one's personal mental models that may also derive from shared ideologies of the group that individual belongs to.

This is why it is appropriate in political discourse to differentiate between three different dimensions that are strictly related: a base level, that is, individual political actors and their systems of beliefs; an intermediate level, namely, political groups and institutions and the collective discourse they entail, and a top level, which comprises political systems and all the socio-cultural, political and historical processes they entail (van Dijk, 2008).

The way political discourse is produced usually proceeds as follows: starting from their mental models about the topic or event, political actors constitute a discourse by using only a fragment of the whole mental model they possess, one that is relevant for the political context of the discourse. As a result, the ideological fragment they choose to perpetuate may resonate with the individual and shared ideology of the socio-political group they aim at addressing, which, in absence of alternative discourses, may solidify even more. This is how stereotypes and prejudices about oppressed groups are created, and why it is vital to analyse media and political discourses. Once again, language is an active part of society: discourses may turn into ideology, ideology may turn into power struggles, and power struggles may turn into dangerous socio-political action.

Knowledge and opinions or attitudes shared by a group about a topic are what create ideologies, and ideologies by definition are abstract, as they need to be able to be applied to different domains. For instance, a racist ideology may concern immigration, but also education, culture, work and so forth. The choice by political actors to include one fragment over another of all information they have on a topic or event is highly contextual, because political discourse is highly contextual in itself. As van Dijk (2008: 176) states:

It has also been suggested that the many genres of political discourse (parliamentary debates, laws, propaganda, slogans, international treaties, peace negotiations, etc.)

are largely defined in contextual, rather than in textual, terms. Political discourse is
not primarily defined by topic or style, but rather by who speaks to whom, as what,
on what occasion and with what goals. In other words, political discourse is
especially 'political' because of its functions in the political process.

Consequently, it is the context model that influences the way the speaker decides to
develop a series of political discourse structures in a strategic way.

Firstly, the topics the political figures choose to emphasise will reflect the
strategic aim of their text or discourse. Negative elements concerning their political
group will be conveniently hidden, while positive characteristics highlighted. On the
contrary, positive elements about the social group they are discussing (for instance,
immigrants) will be concealed, and negative aspects pinpointed. It is the rhetoric of
the Us versus Them that is typical in almost every political text or discourse.

Secondly, the global schematic organisation of a political discourse or text depends
directly on context, which is why it is subject to a great number of constraints. For
instance, parliamentary debates are usually persuasive discourses that need to be
effective in a short amount of time, and thus selection of topics, positive self-
description and negative other-representation, and immediate rejection of
counterarguments are all elements that need to exist in order for the discourse to be
productive. A victory speech by newly elected presidents will likewise rarely focus on
the negative aspects of their countries. It will focus on the mistakes of their
predecessors, especially if belonging to another political party, on the greatness of
those countries' citizens, on the hope for the future, and so forth.

Thirdly, context influences local semantics, that is, the meanings either explicit
or implicit of the actual sentences used in a text or discourse. These should again reflect
and respect the purpose of the discourse and the shared political ideologies of the group
they intend to address. This is because if they do not, then the discourse may seem
disingenuous to more critical recipients, or only a political strategy. The choice of
specific wordings and topics is as a result fundamental as to produce an effective
discourse.

Lastly, context models influence style and rhetoric. Local and global semantics
are expressed through numerous linguistic structures and rhetorical devices that help
emphasise the explicit or underlying meanings of the political discourse. Specific
lexicalisations and syntactic structures, metaphors, rhetorical questions, and so forth

are all elements that may be employed by political figures in order to express and confirm their political identities and ideologies. Style and rhetoric should certainly also respect the level of formality that the context requires, which is another contextual constraint (van Dijk, 2008).

To sum up, political discourse is a prime example of how Critical Discourse Analysis requires a multidisciplinary approach in order to grasp each subject influencing discourse production and reception. Politics is one of the main areas of discourse production that is rarely 'natural' or 'spontaneous'. It lays instead its foundation in cognitive sciences, psychology, strategic use of language and context. What is more, political discourse is more about context than it is about language, and thus requires the understanding of macro-level orders of discourse. It is also rarely personal, as it addresses collective groups of individuals, yet it should be noted that the individual dimension should not be completely disregarded. In fact, mental models pertaining to an individual or a group of individuals contribute to the formation and organisation of political discourse in a strategic way.

In conclusion, political discourse should be seen as the highest expression of the relationship between language and power. Political discourse production and reception is often also commonly known as 'diplomacy', which is the way international and political affairs are conducted through speech or text. Diplomacy also has infinite conceptual branches, especially when it is conducted in difficult times of war. For the purpose of completing the framework of CDA studies and theories, diplomacy in most of its theoretical ramifications will be thoroughly analysed in the next chapter.

2. <u>Diplomacy and Language in Public Political Discourse</u>

The following section will focus on diplomacy in all its branches and its relationship with language. After an extensive definition of diplomacy, and a brief overlook at its history, I shall focus on a set of practical concepts that are typical of diplomatic efforts, namely, public diplomacy, international negotiations, and backchannel negotiations. The theoretical tenets of these practices will be useful to further evaluate how language influences them, and what the main strategies used in public political discourse are. Based on the strategic use of language, it will be possible to draw a comparison between conservative and liberal approaches, of which I shall present and analyse two prime examples.

The aim of the chapter will be to lay the theoretical grounds on the inner workings of the relationship between language and politics, which, as the introductory chapter on the discipline of CDA has demonstrated, is dialectical and essential. This will allow us to understand how that can translate into an analysis of the Vietnam War from a linguistic and communicative point of view, which will be the focus of the last chapter of this dissertation.

2.1. Diplomacy as the Basis of Public Political Discourse

Hence to fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting. (Tzu, 2004: 33)

Sun Tzu was one of the greatest Chinese generals and military strategists of ancient China. In *The Art of War*, which is one of the most classic books on military strategy, he repeatedly highlights the importance of understanding the enemy's mind and tactics before resorting to violence. Only when leaders have full knowledge of their enemies can they consider themselves potential winners. Although it primarily concerns military strategies and war, Sun Tzu's work is still entirely fitting when applied to a concept that appeared around the time in which modern states started to develop, that is, diplomacy.

Diplomacy could be considered the basis of modern international politics, and it is a concretion of political discourse that can translate into infinite branches, such as political speeches, written texts, international negotiations, political debates, and so forth. It is the highest expression of what is commonly referred to as 'soft power', which could be defined as a persuasive approach to international relations that favours words and influence over violence. 'Hard power' is the exact opposite, namely, a coercive approach to international relations that often involves the use of military power.

Diplomacy has been subjected to a great number of changes over history, but it is not a new or innovative approach to international politics. Notwithstanding ancient history, signs of use of diplomacy can be recognised even in the 1500s, a period in which commercial relationships between states were flourishing and needed to ease difficulties over unprecedented commercial endeavours. Then, diplomacy has often been a successful way of ending disputes before they escalate to conflict, or even to end conflicts after they have already happened. The Treaty of Versailles after World War I is a prime historical example of how diplomacy was used to try to prevent another war of that magnitude, which as we know was a failed attempt. In contemporary times the Paris Accords and all subsequent treaties represent a great way of using diplomacy to collectively tackle modern threats such as climate change. Diplomatic efforts certainly do not always result in success, and may even worsen the aversion between the parties involved, as the situation between Russia and Ukraine has showed in recent times.

What should be stressed about diplomacy is that it is the best example of how language can be used in a strategic way as to influence international events. In addition, diplomacy comprehends all spheres that influence language itself, from economy, to politics, to culture, to society, and so forth. It serves in fact as a great tool to analyse how language in all its branches and contexts can change, and be used for specific aims.

In order to grasp the vastity of the universe of diplomacy it may be useful to focus first on some definitions through the work of experts, then on internal and external elements that can influence it, and finally on practical examples of speeches that clearly demonstrate how pregnant with strategic language use political discourse is.

2.1.1. Some Definitions – What is Diplomacy?

Since diplomacy brings together a great number of disciplines and concepts, it could be defined and perceived in several ways, all of which are valid. As a concept that developed over hundreds of years of history of international relations, diplomacy has taken endless forms and seen numerous actors, the main one being States. Corneliu Bjola and Markus Kornprobst (2018: 6) provide a general definition of diplomacy that encompasses all its aspects:

> Diplomacy is the institutionalised communication among internationally recognised representatives of internationally recognised entities through which these representatives produce, manage and distribute public goods.

Firstly, diplomacy is about communication. However, it does not concern any kind of ordinary communication, but one that is 'institutionalised'. Based on the tenets of CDA analysed in the previous chapter, it is clear that context is of great importance when discussing political discourse. Focusing on a type of discursive communication that is institutionalised entails the existence of a set of rules among diplomats or political figures that creates constraints for the production of discourse itself. Nevertheless, one of the key features of diplomacy is that it requires plurality. It is in fact born out of the coexistence of independent actors in an independent world, that are however interdependent by definition. In fact, the actions of one state unequivocally influence the performance of other states. As a result, states feel the need and sometimes impelling pressure to begin 'dialogues' with other states in order to solve disputes or manage their relations (Watson, 2005). It should be noted that even if dialogue is at the forefront of diplomacy, this does not mean that diplomacy is always an innocent endeavour. In fact, it should be perceived as a variety that ranges from pure communication to coercive diplomacy, that is, when violence is used to exercise diplomacy itself.

Secondly, diplomacy concerns actors that are internationally recognised, and that internationally recognise other actors. Although states have always been considered to be the main actors in the international stage, the definition leaves the door open for any actor that is recognised at the international level to be able to participate in diplomatic efforts. This enables us to be conscious of the changes that

diplomacy has been subjected to especially in recent years with the global spread of the new media.

Lastly, diplomacy concerns efforts around the production, management, and distribution of public goods. Public goods should be intended as any type of good (even non-material) that can be enjoyed by states or actors of the international arena. If the desired endgame is achieving these goods, this means that each diplomatic endeavour has a specific aim, whether it be security of the state, military power, international treaties, and so forth. Globalisation has popularised a good portion of these aims, as the issues the world is facing such as climate change or the pandemic are becoming more and more global, and thus need a global diplomatic effort to be solved.

The concept of diplomacy has often been mistaken as being equivalent to that of foreign policy, which is why a clear distinction needs to be made from the beginning. Foreign policy is what governments exercise towards other international actors, while diplomacy is what happens between individuals that are usually diplomats or political actors and that may or may not engage in diplomatic efforts following a certain strategic foreign policy (Satow, 2013). Recognising diplomacy as such means recognising that it is usually conducted through negotiations that happen between individuals. So, referring back to CDA and its tenets, since the individuality of producers of a discourse cannot be overlooked when analysing the discourse in itself, the same should happen in diplomacy. Analysing political discourse linked to diplomatic efforts means taking into consideration a great number of dimensions that cannot be neglected. In fact, if the definition of diplomacy is interpreted as stricter, then it may concern only affairs conducted between representatives of sovereign states. Diplomacy in broader terms comprehends instead all written or spoken acts produced by political figures and meant to influence events in the international arena. Political discourse and diplomacy are thus by definition meant to influence events or individuals not through violence, but through dialogue and collective speaking, which is why they are areas of great interest for CDA.

Political discourse and collective speaking could also be intended in a number of ways that are all still expressions of diplomacy. Conferences are the main expression of collective speaking among political figures from various states, which can become institutionalised through the creation of alliances or unions such as the European Union or NATO. Then, negotiations are the main way diplomacy between

two or more parties is conducted, and they are rich in persuasive and strategic language. What is more, although they do not represent a direct expression of diplomacy, political debates are a prime example of public and strategic political discourse. In order to understand what diplomacy represents today, it is fair to provide a brief overlook of its evolution in history.

2.1.2. The Evolution of Diplomacy: An Ever-changing Art

Even if modern diplomacy is by now highly institutionalised and internationally ruled, it still has a long history that dates back to the Old World, that is, the Eastern part of the world before it came in contact with the Americas. Although primordial and simplistic, instances of diplomatic efforts can be found in ancient China, ancient Greece, or the Roman Empire. There, what today are considered diplomats resembled the figure of messengers, sent from one place to another to convey messages. At least until the 1500s diplomacy was slow and static, as it was constrained by the absence of practical ways of travelling and communicating, and by institutions such as the Church in the Western Hemisphere.

Diplomacy started to flourish during the Renaissance thanks to the creation of new routes of transportation and communication due to commercial needs that eased the diplomatic work of messengers and ambassadors of territories. Their efforts were still difficult to achieve, as representatives of territories were often met with imminent threats and dangerous encounters. The birth of the modern state that is commonly historically aligned with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 and the following principle of the sovereignty of states represented a turning point in the development of diplomacy. In fact, it marked the shift from what is commonly known as 'old diplomacy' to what is commonly referred to by historians as 'new diplomacy'. With the period of the Enlightenment and the numerous wars that the world had to endure during the 18th century, diplomacy started to be conceived in terms of a collective effort to preserve peace and security, which translated into conferences becoming the new norm. The 19th century did in fact witness the gradual professionalisation of diplomacy, as a modern independent state required bureaucratic structures that were occupied with foreign affairs. In addition, it is during this period that publicity and propaganda started to spread, as states craved information on foreign powers. The aim was internally to monitor public opinion (which is one of the elements that influences

diplomacy and politics the most), and externally to extract information about foreign states' conduct (Black, 2010).

With the outbreak of the First World War a period of long peace among the most powerful states especially in Europe ended. It should be noted that peace in the world has seldom existed, as colonial wars and issues of power inequalities among different parts of the world have always existed, and especially in the 19th and 20th centuries. Confining the evolution of diplomacy to the 'Western' hemisphere may in fact seem reductive. However, international diplomacy rarely concerned what is today commonly known as the Third World, as it was practically excluded from the narrative until at least the Decolonisation in the 20th century. The two biggest wars in history from their commencements confronted diplomacy with its own peculiar kind of problems, which stemmed from the dilemma of how to conduct diplomacy in times of war. In other respects, however, the workload of diplomatic missions expanded considerably, as alliances had to be established, and representatives of belligerent states were aiming at persuading non-aligned countries to join their side. This is a practice that became widespread especially during the years that followed World War II, which saw the juxtaposition of the two superpowers of the world (United States and Soviet Union) in what is commonly referred to as the Cold War and bipolarism. What is more, there were several diplomatic efforts in establishing alliances that should have had the aim of preserving peace, such as the League of Nations after WWI, or the United Nations after WWII.

With the two great wars the concept of diplomacy shifted once again from 'new diplomacy' to 'total diplomacy' (Hamilton & Langhorne, 2011). What this means is that sovereign states have been at the forefront of international relations, butnever had a monopoly over diplomacy. In fact, even before technological innovations governments resorted to unofficial routes to satisfy their foreign policy aims. However, the 20th and 21st centuries saw the appearance of actors whose role and influence transcended that of the state, and that completely revolutionised diplomacy. With the appearance of computers and the new media communication became instant and constant, and also new threats that spread through globalisation became popularised. The latest communication revolution allowed in fact for newer and more sophisticated tools to be used to conduct diplomacy or influence public opinion. Among these, language was revolutionised too. Writing a post on social media represents in fact another contextual constraint to the production of discourse that cannot be overlooked.

It also shows how actors that participate in diplomacy are not only official diplomatic figures of a state, but practically anyone. As current times are showing, today individuals can organise in global movements much easier, they can reach the attention of elected officials and even directly participate in conferences, as the case of Greta Thunberg has demonstrated. In a world in which globalisation is vivid and changed the way socio-cultural and political relations work, transnational threats require transnational responses, and those should include actors that go beyond the simplistic idea of sovereign states.

The idea of diplomacy as a strict governmental practice among sovereign states may not be adequate anymore to describe the vastity of its significance today. However, the way diplomacy is conducted still stands, and in order to understand how language can be used with strategic purposes, it is necessary to understand the wider context in which it operates. In addition, diplomacy adds another layer to the difficulty of critically analysing written texts or speeches among political figures, that is, language barriers. The complexity of producing and receiving discourse is in the fact that oftentimes diplomacy practices happen among individuals that speak different languages, or belong to different cultures, which complicates the process of understanding every nuance of the discourse in exam, especially in times of war.

2.1.3. Diplomacy in Times of War: International Organisations and Public Diplomacy

Although they recognise a link between diplomacy and war, scholars in diplomatic literature have often viewed the two as close antagonists, meaning that if there is war, then diplomacy cannot exist. However, history has shown how the relationship between diplomacy and war is much more complicated and alive than it seems. If a point is reached in which war becomes inevitable, then this certainly means that diplomacy has failed to some extent. In fact, as written in the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, the main reason for diplomacy to exist is "resolution of conflict by negotiation and dialogue" (Berridge 2004:187). Although this statement is correct, there are times in which diplomacy simply cannot ease tensions between parties, and war becomes thus unavoidable. In these cases, the aim of diplomacy shifts from maintaining peace to achieving peace. Diplomatic efforts may be used to form alliances and coalitions in order to maintain a global balance of power, or even to

create a situation in which war becomes favourable for one party. What is more, diplomacy has been the way peace agreements were reached after conflicts even of great magnitude such as the two world wars.

The first attempt at creating an institution that guaranteed perpetual peace in the world happened after World War I, that is, the League of Nations. Although this institution was able to control and prevent conflicts among minor states, this happened only because the costs of engaging in a war would be much higher for them than those of engaging in diplomatic solutions. For bigger powers, however, this was not the case. When discussing politics or international relations, in fact, there are a great number of forces in action (public opinion, political pressure, individuality) that need to be addressed in order to grasp the complexity of political discourse. What happened at the dawn of World War II is that the League of Nations had been unable to replace war with diplomacy, and there was a clear realisation of both being much more connected than expected as two sides of the same coin, namely, an international society founded on a principle of balance of power (Watson, 2005). What is more, the absence of the United States in the League of Nations only exacerbated its inefficiency. The creation of the United Nations after World War II only re-marked the interdependent relationship between diplomacy and war, with new concepts such as 'humanitarian intervention' or 'military diplomacy' being at the forefront of a new international stage.

It is in fact during the Cold War era that public diplomacy truly became a key player in American politics. As Nicholas J. Cull (2006) wrote in one of his essays about public diplomacy:

> Public diplomacy…deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communication, as diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of intercultural communications.

Public diplomacy has been at the heart of American political discourse and foreign strategies. A prime example of American public diplomacy was the long telegraph sent

by George Kennan, an American diplomat, in reference to the behaviour of the Soviet Union in the years after World War II. Kennan proposed an image of the Soviet Union that resembled that of a relentless and unstoppable monster wanting to control and invade most of the world. This translated into a containment strategy based on the fact that Soviet pressure had to "be contained by the adroit and vigilant application of counterforce at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points" (Nash, 2008: 825). Consequently, the US was present in a great number of proxy wars and conflicts, especially in non-aligned countries (Third World).

There is in fact a clear connection between the use of language, the use of diplomacy, and action. The years following World War II saw the acceleration of the process of decolonisation of states, in which the United States played a huge role. Although the propaganda among American leaders was focused on portraying the United States as a 'free land' that was helping to end colonialism and pushing for the right to self-determination of states, the United States did instead paradoxically further colonialism itself. US foreign policy was in fact focused on containing the influence of the Soviet Union and of the spread of communism after World War II, which concretized itself for instance in providing aid to Europe through the Marshall Plan, or in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, a military alliance between North American and European countries (Hanhimaki et al., 2015). It is safe to say that the diplomatic aim of US foreign policy was that of controlling key regions in the world. This is why the Vietnam War is remembered as one of the worst diplomatic failures in American history, that is, because the framing of the propaganda around it, and of public diplomacy during that time was inaccurate, and led to irreparable actions.

It should be noted that public diplomacy may seem similar in conceptual terms to propaganda, which is another impactful political tool used as influence, but in reality, they differ. What they have in common is their clear dependence on the strategic use of language, yet the purposes are not the same. Propaganda is any kind of emotionally charged discourse based on actual sources that serves the aim of satisfying an actor's goals. The ethical refusal of this practice is usually linked to the asymmetrical and unilateral character of dialogue between those who push propaganda and those who receive it. Although a negative connotation is often associated with this practice, propaganda may be good or bad. Recent propaganda on the call for action concerning climate change has shown to be effective (even if not enough) in pushing political leaders to consider the gravity of the situation. In the same way, the

propaganda around the MeToo Movement that spread in the late 2010s gave voice to women about their sexual assault experiences all around the world, and re-sparked the conversation about feminism and gender equality. However, when propaganda is used as a political tool in times of war, the effects may be quite catastrophic, as shown by World War II and the discriminatory propaganda against Jewish people.

As propaganda, public diplomacy is linked to power, but in different ways. Public diplomacy is one of the expressions of 'soft power', and unlike propaganda it is less persuasive and manipulative, and centres human interaction. Instead of directly influencing public opinion in a unilateral way through strategic discourse production, it favours dialogue between parties, thus working as a true diplomatic tool (Snow, 2012). So, propaganda and public diplomacy may not be interchangeable, but they are certainly related. Public diplomacy involves in fact morphing the message that a certain country wants to send to the rest of the world through popular cultural routes such as movies, though in a less ruthless way than propaganda.

In order to understand how public diplomacy has represented a pillar in US foreign relations, and in the image of the country that American leaders wanted to portray to the world, it is necessary to understand what the main features of public diplomacy are.

2.1.4. Public Diplomacy: A Taxonomy of the Doctrine

The term 'public diplomacy' became popularised during the Cold War, and internationally in the years following it. It is the process by which political actors aim at reaching foreign publics in order to satisfy the scope of their foreign policies. Although it could be considered the heart of US political strategy throughout its history, a clear analysis of the doctrine has only been proposed in recent years. In one of his essays, Nicholas J. Cull (2008) provides an extensive taxonomy of this approach to diplomacy. Although some of its elements are fairly recent, they can still serve to explain how public diplomacy works. He divides the public diplomacy into five core components: listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, and international broadcasting.

As easy and superficial as it may sound, listening is the precondition for public diplomacy to even exist. In the international arena listening means collecting data on the opinion of citizens, on foreign publics, and on the political environment in

order to produce public diplomacy tactics accordingly. In the United States this was achieved in a systemic way through the introduction of an institution that still exists to this day, that is, the United States Information Agency. This clearly shows the importance that American leaders started attaching to the opinion of their country abroad, on which they built a huge part of their politics. The USIA was in fact introduced during Eisenhower's presidency in 1953, and its aim was "to understand, inform and influence foreign publics in promotion of the national interest, and to broaden the dialogue between Americans and U.S. institutions, and their counterparts abroad" (USIA, 1998). Billions of dollars were spent each year in order to provide an image of the US to the world that resembled that of a free land that was heavily invested in helping build a better world. Consequently, listening and monitoring public opinion in foreign countries became one of the priorities of the United States.

Advocacy is directly connected with listening, and it means engaging in international communication in order to inform the foreign public of policies, and ideas. This is certainly incredibly easier today with social media, and direct ways of communication. During the Cold War years, this was achieved through public press relations, and other informational work through the media available at that time. Although advocacy is a practice that has existed for centuries, for instance through messengers and envoys, American politics used it as a proper strategic communication, and as a pillar of its politics.

Cultural diplomacy is the practice of allowing the transmission of the culture of one country to another and facilitating this process. Historically, this was achieved through the institution of museums in foreign countries for instance, or the promotion of cultural initiatives aimed at showing and spreading the culture heritage of a country to the world. Although this may seem a sophisticated practice, it has actually led to successes in history, so much so that organisations devoted to this approach to diplomacy have been created in a great number of countries.

Linked to cultural diplomacy is the idea of exchange diplomacy, which is more recent than the others. It consists in allowing citizens from one country to spend a period of time studying or learning the culture of another country. Although the aim is mostly cultural, there are cases in which this practice was used to foster military alliances. As opposed to the previous tactics, exchange diplomacy, as the name suggests, is based on an idea of reciprocity between the two countries involved. However, it has still been used throughout history to foster national interests.

Lastly, there is international broadcasting. International news broadcasting may be the most famous and direct way of influencing foreign publics, especially in current times, as it often overlaps with all the previous tactics described. The advent of social media has in fact completely revolutionised the way news circulate, and the way they are received, even leading to major issues such as fake news that are hard to spot and dismantle. The issue of fake news and propagandist and sensationalist information is not however new. Even if not with the same speed and facility, the strategic use of news has been a constant throughout history, especially through radio and television in the 20th century.

Even though they all belong to the same macro-category of public diplomacy, these subfields have entirely different conceptual frames. In fact, they aim at addressing diverse parts of society, and achieving that by using a variety of strategic cultural and diplomatic tools. In order for these communicative strategies to work, a clear sentiment of credibility should be evoked on the receivers, and this can be reached through a strategic use of language. This is why discourse demonstrates to be once again at the core of diplomacy and policies. It is indeed possible to propose and enact a perfectly organised policy that would benefit the civil society or the international realm, but that could become less effective if not publicised correctly. At the same time, a perfectly crafted diplomatic discourse around a bad policy will never be enough to hide its ineffectiveness.

A prime example of bad advocacy and absence of credibility is represented by what is commonly known as the worst diplomatic disaster in US history, namely, the Vietnam War. During those years the United States spent an enormous amount of money to advocate for the participation in the war in Vietnam, the most of any other historical period. The focus, however, was on providing a version of reality that was simply untrue, and that became clear at the eyes of the world. As John Pilger (1986: 178) wrote:

> This 'historical amnesia' is not accidental; if anything it demonstrates the insidious power of the dominant propaganda of the Vietnam War. The constant American government line was that the war was essentially a conflict of Vietnamese against Vietnamese, in which Americans became 'involved', mistakenly and honourably. This assumption was shared both by hawks and doves; it permeated the media

coverage during the war and has been the overriding theme of numerous retrospectives since the war. It is a false and frequently dishonest assumption.

Historical amnesia refers to the fact that most individuals in the United States could not even pinpoint which side the United States was supporting during the war, as the propaganda to which they were subjected was so strong and confusing. However, it is when the discrepancy between reality and appearance is so limpid that credibility starts to fade. In fact, the atrocities perpetuated by the United States in Vietnam territories through the infinite missions, the killing of civilians, the destruction of villages and so forth, proved to be much stronger than any formal speech by US political figures in support of the Vietnam War. What is more, the Vietnam War period saw the insurgence of one of the strongest anti-war movements in history, in a time in which social movements concerning civil rights, workers' rights, women's rights and more were gaining a global dimension. It is in fact often said that the strong opposition against the involvement of the United States in Vietnam was a major factor in its demise.

Focusing again on political discourse, it is also interesting to notice how in the years following the Vietnam War, the latter has often been referred to by American political figures as a 'tragedy', which is a prime example of strategic use of language. In fact, a tragedy is usually a tragic event that happens accidentally to an individual or a community. Referring to a pre-organised, well thought-out, and strategic war intervention as a tragedy evokes a feeling of sadness on listeners, which overshadows the gravity and premeditation behind it. There are a number of ways in which diplomacy translates into practice, and in which linguistic and persuasive strategies are crucial. The most important and most used is international bargaining, more commonly known as international negotiations. These are highly influenced by public diplomacy, and are the main route taken to solve disputes of any kind among countries, or to reach international agreements. It may be useful to understand their basic workings, as they present characteristics that can be associated with a strategic use of language at the political level.

2.1.5. Diplomacy in Action: Basic Theory on International Negotiations

International negotiations are the ground upon which diplomacy is built. In current times, the number of international negotiations has skyrocketed for a number of reasons. First, states are more interdependent, meaning that policies of one country inevitably influence the others. Then, at the end of the Cold War the value of military power diminished in exchange for a system of international negotiations. New actors have gained control such as NGOs and international organisations, creating innovative ways with respect to the past in which states are tied together. Finally, the number of issues the world is facing is increasing, and they are more complex than ever. As a result, there is a requirement for actors to cooperate at a global level in order to attempt to find solutions for issues that concern the entire world.

Examples of negotiations in current times are those around Brexit, negotiations to tackle climate change, negotiations between Israel and Palestine, and so forth. These examples show how the variety of topics discussed through international negotiations is infinite, which is what usually enables them to be effective. Other times, however, and especially in the resolution of conflicts, negotiations may stall, and create an uncomfortable situation in which in order for parties to reach a solution, one of the parties needs to 'surrender'. A current example of this are the negotiations (or talks) between Russia and Ukraine, which do not seem to proceed peacefully. In fact, negotiations may last even years before reaching a point of agreement between parties. Usually, these are talks and negotiations around peace agreements following a conflict. The same happened during the Vietnam War, one of the greatest examples in which diplomacy was even conducted in an unusual way with the use of secret or backchannel negotiations.

Berridge (2015: 3) defines international negotiations as follows:

In international politics, negotiation consists of discussion between officially designated representatives with the object of achieving the formal agreement of their governments to a way forward on an issue that has come up in their relations.

Negotiations are certainly only one of the functions of diplomacy, yet they are the most important. When negotiating, actors have clear interests and aims that they want to achieve.

The actors that operate in negotiations may be composed of two or more parties. If they are more, then there can be coalitions in order to group countries or participants that have the same interests. The link between negotiations and public diplomacy is simple in theory, yet complicated in practice. Constituents, that is, citizens of one specific country, are as much part of negotiation processes as the actorsthat are actually negotiating. This is because usually international negotiations have ahuge impact on the population based on the issue discussed, so negotiators (and political leaders) need to fulfil the task of explaining to the public what has been achieved. It is under this context that language becomes strategic, as explaining a negotiation to the mass public in which the national interest of the country was not fulfilled, for instance, may be difficult and require linguistic strategies that minimise the failure. In fact, it is necessary to highlight the fact that the final aim of a negotiationis that of finding an agreement. An agreement, however, does not mean every side obtains what they want. It is a compromise.

In order to maximise their interests, parties in a negotiation usually adopt strategies, that remain the same during all the negotiation process. What can change are tactics, that are tricks to implement the major strategy. The strategies (even in language) that parties can adopt are three: yielding, contending, and problem-solving (Pruitt, 1991). Yielding means that the party will adopt a friendly attitude both in language and behaviour and will be much more prone to make concessions to the adversary. Contending means the opposite, that is, the party will be reluctant to guarantee concessions to the counterpart. Problem-solving is an approach in which all parties explicitly clarify their interests, so that an agreement that equally benefits everyone may be reached.

The process of the negotiations and the behaviour of negotiators can however change based on four aspects: culture, structural context, situational factors, and individuality (Hopmann, 1995). If there are differences in cultures among parties that may include linguistic differences, then the negotiation may require the use of a mediator, and it may be more difficult to negotiate. Then, structural context refers to all the elements that may externally influence negotiations. A prime example of this is public opinion, which throughout the history of international negotiations has shown how influential it can be in determining the direction towards which the negotiation is going. Situational factors are all the characteristics that concern the specificity of the negotiation.

For instance, in current times humanitarian issues are the most common, and thus require a cooperative effort in order to find an agreement that benefits all parties. Finally, the personality of the negotiator cannot be neglected. As the theoretical tenets of CDA have demonstrated, even though individuals produce and receive discourse based on societal conventions and contextual constraints, there is a specificity to the individuality of people that cannot be neglected.

Nevertheless, not only does strategic language influence the natural course of negotiations, but also their implementation. The final step of a negotiation is in fact represented by the implementation of the agreement reached, which is not always easy. In legalisation literature, language is crucial as to establish the compulsoriness of an agreement, based on the flexibility of the language used. Linos and Pegram (2016) identify three related linguistic strategies that may influence the subsequent parties' behaviour: vagueness, options, and caveats.

The first strategy is vagueness, that is, the act of describing controversial provisions through a vague language, so that more interpretations are allowed. Then, part of the provisions may be optional following a specific use of language. A clear instance of this is the different use of modals. Stating that a state 'shall' comply with the agreement is a suggestion, not a duty. Asserting instead that a state 'must' respect its duty with respect to an agreement means that there is a clear obligation of compliance. It is upon these little tricks and glitches in language that legal cases may be built, and there have been instances where, due to a too vague use of language, they have been successful. Finally, caveats are limitations to the compliance to a certain provision. This means that the provision requires compliance only if specific political, social, and economic conditions occur. The dangerousness of these small linguistic strategies is that they can lead to huge changes in the ways a certain agreement is perceived by states, or even to legal issues. What is more, the use of language is available to all parties at any time and is at their full discretion. As a result, the risks of using a language that is too vague and too flexible may result in numerous scenarios: actors may behave differently than the negotiations expected; nonbinding agreements may not be implemented by parties, as they do not require legal compliance; states may focus on provisions of an agreement that are binding, and neglect nonbinding ones, and so forth.

In summary, language is a powerful tool that can be used not only in publicpolitical discourse or negotiations, but also in legal matters, which is why it is important to analyse it. As regards negotiations, they are often conducted in a specific formal context. This entails constraints that concern both language and the way negotiations proceed. There exists however another dimension to diplomacy that is commonly known as track two diplomacy or backchannel negotiations. This is a practice that is still used today, and that does not limit actors or parties with the same constraints as regular diplomacy. It was widely used throughout history to solve conflicts, the Vietnam War being one of the main examples, which is why it deserves further attention.

2.1.6. Diplomacy in Action: Track Two Diplomacy and Backchannel Negotiations

Diplomacy in terms of international negotiations can translate into a great number of practices that are equal in nature, but different in the way they function. The most common type of negotiations is direct bargaining between two or more parties, but this is not the only option, and often not even the most effective. Direct negotiations in fact are subjected to contextual constraints and to external pressures, such as public opinion. This does not happen in what is commonly referred to as track two diplomacy, or backchannel negotiations. Although this practice can be found in past history, one of the first definitions of the term was provided by Joseph Montville in 1981. Track two diplomacy is:

> unofficial, informal interaction between members of adversarial groups or nations
> with the goals of developing strategies, influencing public opinion, and organizing
> human and material resources in ways that might help resolve the conflict.

Track two diplomacy is thus a form of negotiation that transcends its regular meaning, which can be referred to as track one diplomacy. Contrary to track one, track two diplomacy is unofficial and informal. The actors that participate in it may be individuals that are close to the top decision-makers, that is, usually presidents, or third parties. According to historians track two diplomacy is mainly a subfield of conflict resolution, meaning it is mostly used in peace processes (Jones, 2015). This happens because peace processes usually entail a high level of hostility which hinders the negotiations and the possibility of an agreement.

Backchannel negotiations usually happen in secret and are admitted by participants *post facto*. However, it is important to underline the fact that backchannelnegotiations do not substitute track one diplomacy. In fact, they often happen parallelly, and especially when front channel negotiations do not seem to produce anyfavourable result. They help actors to overcome deadlocks in the negotiations, which are typical in peace processes, as the current talks between Russia and Ukraine are demonstrating. Even when they are not secret, they are usually conducted quietly, because in this way participants are not afraid to communicate positions or opinions that would be hard to admit in the official negotiation. In backchannel negotiations strategic language moves to the background, as the aim is looking for a solution that is then transferred to the official negotiation.

Track two diplomacy allows for specific difficulties to be overcome, and this are clearly explained by Wanis-St. John (2006). Firstly, backchannel negotiations reduce the costs of entry. Preconditions for entering a negotiation (which requires the consent of all parties) may lead to the refusal to negotiate. This happens because, especially in conflict resolutions, negotiating would mean legitimising the other party, and thus giving the perception of having surrendered. In fact, in armed conflicts a precondition to begin negotiations is usually a ceasefire, so the will not to negotiate may be strategically intentional.

Secondly, backchannel negotiations avoid the issue of 'spoilers'. Spoilers are all external and internal actors in a negotiation that have interest in maintaining the *status quo*, thus hindering the search for an agreement. Through backchannel negotiations an agreement among the parties is reached before spoilers can intervene, which is what increases their effectiveness.

Thirdly, there are usually information asymmetries among parties in a negotiation. What this means is that usually one party is reluctant to allow the other party to know about what their real interests and priorities are for fear of looking to friendly, or simply for strategic purposes. Backchannel negotiations reduce such uncertainties and allow for a friendlier environment to develop.

Lastly, fear of the outcome of the negotiation may prevent negotiations from happening. This is common especially during elections, a time in which any political mistake may result in the loss of support from the electorate, which is why foreign policy and action is meticulously calculated in election periods. Backchannel

negotiations reduce this fear, as a pre-agreement may be found during secret negotiations, thus without pressure from the public, and then translated into a formal agreement in the official negotiation.

Backchannel negotiations have been a constant in a number of events in recent history, the main being the Vietnam War. In fact, during the war, National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger began secret peace talks with North Vietnamese representative Le Duc Tho, which were one of the reasons that eventually led to a halt in the conflict. Even though negotiations were conducted in secrecy, there was another element of pressure that contributed to influence the decisions of political figures at the top regarding the war, that is, public opinion. Among mass public opinion there was the rampant spread of the conviction that the war may not be as beneficial as leaders wanted to portray, which is what later pushed the public towards the creation of solid anti-war movements. The Vietnam War was a great example of how important public opinion was and still is for the United States and most countries in the international arena, which is why it deserves further analysis.

2.1.7. The Power of Public Opinion: An Overlook of its Influence

One of the most influential elements that is at the core of the aim of public diplomacy and public political discourse in general is public opinion, which is a concept that has been subjected to different perceptions over history. Mass public opinion has demonstrated to be effective in influencing international negotiations and creating pressures for political leaders to change their behaviour towards specific matters. The literature on public opinion is vast as it encompasses numerous doctrines, and its perception has witnessed distinct phases over time. Although public opinion is a concept that has existed in various forms for centuries, it is necessary to focus on recent history as to grasp its influential political purposes. It may also be effective to start from a perception of public opinion that has by now been confuted by historians in order to understand how its meaning changed over time.

After World War II the consensus among historians around public opinion revolved around three aspects that need clarification:

* Public opinion is highly volatile and thus it provides very dubious foundations for a sound foreign policy.

* Public attitudes on foreign affairs are so lacking in structure and coherence that they might best be described as 'non-attitudes.'

* At the end of the day, however, public opinion has a very limited impact on the conduct of foreign policy (Holsti, 1992: 442).

These three assumptions are what created the so-called Almond-Lippmann consensus, as both historians shared their views on public opinion. Firstly, mass public opinion was described as volatile, that is, individuals were considered to be not so informed, and so interested in international affairs that their perceptions could influence foreign policies. What is more, public opinion was described as mood-driven, meaning that "often the public is apathetic when it should be concerned, and panicky when it should be calm" (Almond, 1956: 372, 376). Although this may seem a pessimistic and quite insulting approach to the mass public, it was backed by surveys and data that showed how Americans were in fact not that familiar with foreign affairs. It is fair to mention that historians that supported this thesis have since changed their stance on public opinion.

Secondly, public opinion was considered to be lacking structure and coherence. What this means is that according to historians the general public did not form political beliefs based on a set of ideologies that would be recognisable and coherent, but instead responded irrationally to any information they received. They may even repeatedly change their attitude towards a certain issue, so much so that in the end no concrete opinion was formed, which is why they became almost 'non-attitudes'. Consequently, since volatile, incoherent, and lacking structure, public opinion should not receive the large attention of policy makers or political figures.

Lastly and most importantly, public opinion was deemed as having little to no impact on the creation and application of foreign policies. There was fear that an emotion-driven and misinformed public opinion could undermine American diplomacy at the international levels by creating constraints or too high expectations for policy makers, and that fear sometimes turned to reality. However, there was a clear absence of systematic research and literature on the inner workings of public opinion, and that weakened the credence that it could be such a potent and influential element in politics (Holsti, 1992).

The interest towards public opinion saw a renaissance in the years during the Vietnam War in the US, which was a time in which a high number of ideals and values that the US wanted to portray to the world started to fade. On the one hand, at a broader

level the opposition of the general public in the US towards the involvement in the Vietnam War shifted the perception of public opinion from being simply irrational, to being more accurate than the actual administration. On the other hand, at a smaller level more meticulous surveys and polls started to be conducted on public opinion concerning the Vietnam War, and they showed the clear opposition of citizens against it. This led to the United States starting to perceive public opinion as a true political actor able to influence foreign policies, so much so that institutions aimed at its monitoring were created.

Concerning the volatility of public opinion, in fact, research has shown how actually majority of the changes in public attitudes towards the war in Vietnam did not happen based on emotional and unreasonable feelings, but on facts. Rising deaths, destruction of cities is what fuelled the opposition of the general public towards the war, which may be a deterministic and simplistic connection, but it still confutes the theory that public opinion is volatile. This means that public opinion is based on actual foreign policies and international events, and it certainly shifts depending on which direction the public prefers (Mueller, 1973).

Claims that public opinion stood upon incoherence and lack of structure were also confuted. The perception was that unlike the mass public, political leaders proceeded in their political opinions and consequently endeavours based on clear ideologies. However, if the 1960s are considered, this is simply factually incorrect. In fact, this was a time in which social movements started to spread across the United States, and across the globe. One of the greatest examples of coherence and structure in a social movement was the Civil Rights Movement, born precisely in the US. The movement resulted from the clear and structured idea that discrimination and racial segregation were vivid in the US, and that led to protests and campaigns that influenced enormously domestic and foreign policies. It may be interesting to digress and highlight once again the fact that strategic language use was pivotal in the success of campaigns proposed by activists. Words, chants, and slogans used during those years still remain influential to this day. For instance, the famous speech by Martin Luther King "I have a dream" is an iconic speech in history that is still highly quoted by political figures today. What is more, the movements led to tangible political results towards racial integration in the country, which clearly shows how public opinion can translate into systematic organisation, and that into action that influences the political realm.

The example of social movements involving the rights of minorities in the US may even debunk the idea that public opinion does not impact domestic and foreign policies. How the public opinion translates into action is through voting, and studies have shown how presidential efforts in foreign policy in the years following World War II have been mindful of the mass public. This comes from the conviction that voters will punish candidates that have been involved in foreign policy failures, and instead reward those who have conducted successful missions abroad, to the point that political leaders consider ahead the probability of success or failure of a policy before embarking in it (Fiorina, 1981). Successes and failures especially in foreign policies are in fact almost automatically attributed to those who have been involved in them and become part of their *curriculum vitae*. During her presidential run against Donald Trump, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was repeatedly referred to as a 'war criminal' based on her failures in foreign policy under Obama's presidency. Although it is safe to say that much of the 2016 elections were based on the weaponisation of fake news through social media, and on misogyny, which are topics that would require years of analysis, public opinion on candidates was still highly influenced by their precedent endeavours in public service.

In order to understand who constitutes public opinion, and how it is formed, it is necessary to consider the 18th century, and more precisely the period of the Enlightenment. In fact, this was a time in which rationality started to spread among sciences, and this led to the creation of cultural places such as coffee houses or taverns in which discussions on current events were frequent. What is more, the literacy rate was rapidly increasing, and thus culture was more accessible even to those who could not afford it before. Concerning governance, philosophers and historians shifted towards an idea of politics that was more rational, based on the idea that "the governors have nothing to support them but opinion. It is, therefore, "on opinion only that government is founded" (Hume 1963: 29). Increasing availability of published information, higher literacy, and cultural associations were what created the public sphere, which in time could challenge the authority of political figures and even participate in the political sphere. Notwithstanding geographical differences, however, the power of public opinion was still reduced by the limits in voting rights that hindered the expression of a high number of individuals, thus creating class, gender, and race struggles. As a result, having the right to vote meant gaining access to the public sphere (Lewis, 2001).

This entails another interesting fact that leans towards psychology: publicopinion is often formed based on proximity with the issue considered. Individuals whobelong to the middle class may feel strongly about the majority of richness being concentrated into a small percentage of the population. In the same way, workers may be interested in legislation fostering workers' rights, and so forth. In addition,individuals tend to empathise with other individuals that may present the samecharacteristics as them, thus giving life to what is commonly known, for instance, asclass solidarity. There are elements, however, that can change this simple equation,and the media are one of them. Bernard Cohen perfectly summarised this into asentence, stating that the media "may not be successful in telling people what to think,but it is stunningly successful in telling [people] what to think about" (Cohen 1963: 13).

Although class solidarity, individual characteristics, and proximity with the issue influence the way opinions are formed, there are external pressures that require consideration when analysing public opinion. Under this perspective, it is not crucial to consider the propagandistic aims of the media, although of great importance. For instance, being pounded with news about immigration (whether under a good light or not) does not automatically equate to all individuals thinking that immigrants are good or bad. It may however indicate immigration as a topic that is worth forming an opinion upon: the influence lies in the attention given to the issue, not in the propaganda, and this counts for any topic. Taking again into exam the 2016 US presidential elections, former president Donald Trump built a huge part of his political campaign on the building of the famous wall with Mexico. Without casting judgements on the absurdity or not of the proposal, this has become one of the mantras of that time, and polls and surveys on public opinion gravitated towards that topic.

What this means is that public opinion is firstly a game of inclusion and exclusion that is played even in current times, which is yet again linked to discourse and language. There is in fact a reason why political debates during elections are highly different than victory speeches by newly elected presidents. The way a candidate chooses to produce discourse about immigrants during an electoral debate mayindicate that immigrants are somewhat excluded from the public sphere narrative, as they become the issue in object. In the same way, addressing immigrants during a victory speech means including them in the public sphere, and thus legitimising their opinions. In addition, discussing public opinion in a modern democracy may differ enormously than discussing public opinion undern a dictatorship.

This clearly demonstrates why public political discourse is a linguistic strategy before anything else, and that has remained a constant throughout history. Critical Discourse Analysis and other innovative approaches allow for all of these dimensionsthat may escape the eye of common individuals to emerge. Public opinion has been pivotal in some of the most crucial events in history (as the analysis on the Vietnam War should demonstrate in the next chapters), and it is influenced by the same elements that critical discourse analysis aims at examining. Although the meaning of what public opinion and the public sphere are changed over history, it is pertinent to assert that structural conditions such as class, gender, and race inequalities have alwaysplayed a role in its shaping, and these always become evident through language. Political language is first and foremost an issue of representation, and there are a set of strategies that can be used to morph it in any wanted way, which is a concept that requires further attention.

2.2 Public Political Discourse: The Link between Language and Politics

 As the theoretical overlook on Critical Discourse Analysis and the evaluation on the relationship between diplomacy and language have demonstrated, there is a visible connection between language and politics. As negotiations show, the view of politics and diplomacy is based on a process of decision-making and action that finds its roots in an environment of constant uncertainty, risk, and perpetual disagreements. Although it is correct to state that language directly influences political action, the focus of innovative approaches to linguistics should be on representation, rather than on action. In fact, political discourse analysis focuses on the perpetuation of power inequalities through political discourse, which is mostly an issue of representation.

As explained in chapter 1.5., Van Dijk adds another layer to political discourse which is context, meaning that any discourse produced outside of political context is not political. This is an important premise, as political contexts are usually institutional contexts, which on one side provide the speaker with the agency to exert influence on the listeners, and on the other constraint the speaker with a series of formal and linguistic rules that should be respected. Focusing on the structure of a political text (written or spoken), and thus the representation of reality that it fosters allows the critical analysis to evaluate in a systematic way the intention behind it, which language inherently has. In fact, when one deliberates on public policies, they deliberate about

what should be done and what should not. When one deliberates about legal matters, their aim is to condemn or absolve someone of something they have done, and so forth. As Aristotle stated about language, "speech, on the other hand, serves to indicate what is useful and what is harmful, and so also what is just and what is unjust" (Ackrill, 1987: 1253a 1–18).

Under this approach the way leaders use language becomes the premise in argument for the action needed. The question around whether Donald Trump incited the Capitolriots on January 6, 2021 or not concerns this exact issue, namely, evaluating if behind his language there was the clear intention to persuade individuals and movements of the far right to organise and attack the Capitol. As explained by Fairclough (2012), under certain conditions discourse may be 'operationalised', and thus turn into practice. This process is not inevitable, but it depends on a set of conditions and possibilities that have a wide range. Discourse may turn into new ways of acting or may serve as a mean to inculcate new ways of being, that is, new identities, or it maybe physically materialised.

A clear example of one instance in which language contributes to new ways of being is the discourse around immigration. The definition of immigrant provided by the dictionary is 'someone who is fleeing their country to migrate to another country'. However, there are a set of terms use to describe the variety of immigrants. 'Political refugee' is someone who flees their country for fear of persecution based on aspects of their identity. 'Asylum seeker' is someone who has applied for asylum in a country different than his home country. 'Climate refugee' is a category that is expected to increase in number in the future, and is someone who is fleeing their country as a result of the catastrophic effects of climate change. 'Internally displaced person' is an individual who was forced to flee from his home, but stays within the borders of their country. Finally, 'stateless person' is an individual who is not considered the national of any country under law, and may also be a refugee. In theory, all these terms indicate the same meaning, yet they have entirely different implications based on their use. Under the legal context gaining the state of political refugee guarantees benefits that the simple definition of immigrant usually does not.

In summary, this categorisation shows how language has severe implications, and may be used in order to persuade or convince the public of specific ideas. Strategies in discourse production are certainly endless, so much that under the field of politics there are courses and lectures on strategic communications for individuals

that wish to undertake a political career. This is also the reason why individuality in political discourse production should not be avoided, as the personal dimension influences the way language is produced as much as context, and all the other elements.

Political leaders in the United States are known to be not that secretive when it comesto linguistic strategies to persuade the public. It is in fact possible to identify a numberof linguistic strategies that are recurrent in almost every political discourse, and that clearly show the persuasive intent of framing events or individuals under a specific light. One of the most used linguistic strategies in any public political discourse, whether written or spoken, concerns the forced opposition between two or more groups. This is more commonly known as 'Othering', or the 'Us versus Them' dichotomy (Huynh, 2015).

2.2.1. Linguistic Strategies in Practice: Othering and the Us versus Them Rhetoric

Among the infinite linguistic and communicative strategies used in public political discourse of any type, Othering and the Us versus Them rhetoric may be the most used. The reason why this is one of the most effective tactics is that all individuals inherently identify themselves as belonging to one or more social groups. As group members, they often share ideologies that may be opposing to those of other groups, which is what leads to the Us versus Them dichotomy. This approach works both at a micro-level, meaning considering groups of individuals, and at a macro-level, that is, for instance, opposition between two countries. As a result, political leaders quite literally pick and choose who to elevate in their discourses based on political needs and contexts. This can happen across the numerous fields of public political discourse, from written acts to public speaking. In doing so, individuals belonging to the same groups tend to consider their base ideology as the right one, which leads to a positive self-representation (us) and a negative representation of the others (them) (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

History has always been characterised by this dichotomy, and this has even led to catastrophic events. The Holocaust is among the greatest historical examples of the effects that Othering may have on social groups, and in this case, religious minorities. The incessant Nazi propaganda against Jewish people is what cemented the idea that differences should be perceived as threats. It started from the proposition almost of a

set of rules that needed to be respected in order to be considered a true German. Undeniably, the Nazis were effective in applying the Othering technique to German Jewish people by basically excluding them from what true Germanness should be considered to be, which was one of the conceptual bases of the propaganda that led to one of the worst genocides in history. The same discourse could be applied again to the Cold War period, in which the strategic aim of the United States was that of Othering the Soviet Union as a tangible threat undermining the freedom of the world.

In the same way, the narrative around the United States proposed by the Soviet Unionwas that of a colonial power that aimed at invading the world. In current times, this is clear in discourses around immigration, or more broadly, around racial inequality. Othering may thus be used as a simple and direct political tactic in public discourse toestablish familiarity between the speaker and the receivers, but it may also lead to dangerous stereotypes that become, if cemented, hard to dismantle.

So as to provide an exhaustive definition of Othering, it should be highlighted that the concept of 'other' has been of great interest for psychoanalysis. In psychoanalysis 'other' is anything or anyone other than the 'self', onto which we usually still project what is repressed in ourselves (Kristeva, 1991). However, in sociological terms the definition gains a more specific meaning, that is:

> [...] Othering, which refers to Otherness as the process of attaching moral codes of inferiority to difference, the critical discursive tool of discrimination and exclusion used against individuals on the basis of their belonging to marginalized groups. The oppressive force of Otherness comes from the separating line or border created, and from its exclusionary effect (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012: 299).

Under this perspective, groups composed of individuals with their own personality and character are seen as a whole and described in unified terms that rarely represent reality. It is important to note that although there have been improvements in recent times in the use of a more inclusive language, Othering still remains a practice that is transparent and accepted as natural. Linguistic and behavioural strategies that show hierarchies and issues of power inequality are still present and may even sometimes be involuntary. What is more, they are a result of hundreds of years of ordinary practices that require extensive work to be spotted and changed, which is the reason why innovative approaches such as CDA have been developed.

Othering is often characterised by four main inner workings that lead to alienation and distance: objectification, decontextualization, dehistorization, and deauthorization. Firstly, objectification is the basis of Othering. It means ignoring the individuality and complex personal dimension of individuals, and reducing them to stereotypes that are mostly negative, which should be a practice of easy identification when analysing history. Secondly, similarly to objectification, decontextualization means removing the context from a specific behaviour that an individual had or developed over time, so as to deprive it of its rationality. This results in the attribution of specific behaviours to situations by a group of individuals that may instead behave differently if context was considered. In practice, for instance, stating that gun violence in the United States is more frequent among black people is both objectification and decontextualization, as it does not consider the general context of racism and racial inequality in the United States. Thirdly, dehistorization means depriving individuals of their personal history, that is, how they became to be who they are. This could also be applied at a bigger scale, that is, dehistorization may result in the exclusion of certain peoples' history from the popular narrative. What this results in is a historical narrative that only considers one point of view, which is why attempts have recently been made at revisioning history through more inclusive perspectives. Lastly, deauthorization is mainly pertinent to text production, and involves the purposeful absence of an author, so as to present facts and events as given, and not as the consequence of one's personal and self-serving selection (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012).

In practice, these elements merge to create the common dualism between positive self-description and negative depiction of the other. In a live public speaking setting, emphasising the achievements, the hopes, and the positive about 'us', which is often citizens of the same country, creates familiarity and pride among listeners. A strategy often used by presidents is emphasising what they have achieved over their presidencies as a means to maintaining the trust they may have gained from citizens, and in the same way diminish what their opponents have achieved.

On the opposite side, fostering hostility towards 'them' (whether it be immigrants, a foreign country, a minority, and so forth) has also often worked in increasing group solidarity. Creating a sort of bogeyman that can be identified as the true enemy is an effective strategy to avoid responsibility or the real issue (Atkinson, 1984). A prime example of the Us versus Them dichotomy is represented by the first remarks after 9/11 by President George W. Bush.

He debuted his speech as follows: "Good evening. Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts" (Leudar et al., 2004). Addressing his fellow citizens ('us'), he repeatedly highlights that the events were an attack not on individuals that were present at that moment, but on the way of life (the freedom) that characterises Americans, and thus on the entire nation. What is more, this implies that there is another entity, those who carried the attacks, who are instead opposers of freedom, and deliberately aim at undermining that of the United States. With just the beginning sentence of one speech in history, it becomes clear that there is much to unpack when analysing strategic language use. The war on terror that followed the 9/11 attacks is also a great demonstration of how a specific narrative can lead to actions that may or may not result in the same destruction and death.

Unveiling practices in language and discourse production that hide power struggles beneath them is fundamental to attempt to strip societies of inequalities, or at least to be sure that they become evident and recognisable. Linked to the issue of Othering, and the Us versus Them dichotomy is another practice that has been consciously or unconsciously used across language, and language production in relation to historical events, that is, the juxtaposition between the East and the West.

2.2.2. Linguistic Strategies in Practice: The Contrast between East and West

The juxtaposition between the East and West has been at the forefront of public political discourse for centuries, and like Othering, it has essentially divided the world into two hemispheres in opposition. In reality, if we imagined the world not in terms of East and West, but as a unified bloc, we would recognise that the so-called East has influenced enormously our idea of West and Western values. In fact, the idea of a Western civilisation that has values that are entirely different than the East is a clear social construct and has been used in history to justify intervention in conflicts that would not have instead been possible. The idea of the United States as bearer of freedom and civilization has been a constant in political discourse, and has even led to its embarkation in military missions that resulted in catastrophes, or full-blown wars.

The starting point to unveil this social construct is maybe the most influential book on the matter, which is *Orientalism* by Edward Said. In his book, he describes Orientalism as follows:

> Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident.' Thus a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, 'mind,' destiny, and so on (Said, 1991: 2-3).

It is important to state that the aim of Orientalism is not that of denying the existence of cultures or groups of individuals that have developed in the East by eliminating the dualism in itself. The aim of Orientalism is to assert the fact that their existence is much bigger than the depiction of them by the West. In practical terms, when any political figure starts digressing about the East, it may be useful to analyse the presence or not of strategic conditions under which they are using this term. On the one hand, if they are using this dichotomy to state a simple geographical difference, then it may be acceptable. On the other hand, however, if the undertone (often subtle) is that of highlighting the superiority of the West over the East, then the contextual setting of the discourse is that of Othering. Under this approach, in fact, Western countries have 'othered' the East by attributing characteristics to its inhabitants that do not reflect the perceived norm, which is Western values. This can be clearly seen across all fields, ranging from history to art. Historically, Orientalism essentially means gaining control over the depiction of the East by describing it, representing it through art, narrating it, and ultimately ruling it. As a result, it is a Western habit that concerns believing to have the authority to dominate another place (both materially and ideologically), to modify it, and to control it.

According to Said, the contraposition between Orient and Occident finds its roots in imperialism. In fact, the already hostile encounter of people of different nations and races during colonial and imperial times exacerbated the need to create 'factions' that

would represent the characteristics of the groups that came in contact. As a consequence, differences in identities between colonisers and colonised created the thesis that one was better than the other, and only one could exist. The perception was that of Eastern societies being static and not as advanced as the Western, which created a hierarchy in which the West was justified to conquer them and export their values. Such divisions would in fact establish power relations that favoured one group over the other (Said, 2000). This idea would continue throughout history and until current times by crossing numerous forms, from nationalism to today's populism.

Under this perspective Orient and Occident exist as social constructs that indicate social, economic, and political power differences more than merely different geographical collocations. This is demonstrated by the fact that the perception of what East and West indicate in terms of geographical collocation has entirely changed over time. If in past times East was practically linked with Asia, and West with Europe, today the West includes larger territories. Australia, Western Europe and North America are all seen as belonging to the West, while territories such as post-Soviet states as the East. In addition, there are places such as China and Japan that are considered to align with a 'Western way of life'. From a linguistic point of view, it follows that what one perceives as West depends entirely on the purpose of who is using the term (McNeill, 1997).

It is fair to state that in any society there is a variety of cultures, and ideas that may result in one of them being the most influential, and thus leading to a hegemonic cultural leadership. It is a natural process that happens in any society that is not characterised by totalitarianism or dictatorship. However, the issue starts when the prevailing idea is that of the superiority of one culture over the others. A clear example of that is the idea of Europe, which is a collective concept that plays the same game as the Us versus Them dichotomy. In fact, there have been a high number of instances throughout history in which the hegemonic cultural idea in Europe was its superiority over 'non-European' countries. What this entails is the establishment of a system of hierarchies in which certain territories (or countries today) inherently gain control over the rest of the system, as they are considered to be objectively superior (Hay, 1968). Ironically there would be no reason to not think of Europe as the superior bloc, as the major innovations and scientific revolutions in history happened there. What is more, European colonialism has worked for a long time in subordinating other places in the world to their control with little to no possible reaction.

In recent times, this is the pillar of capitalism and unequal distribution of wealthin the world. Even if after decolonisation the world has witnessed the appearance of new countries in the so-called Third World, these have not been able to proceed and develop at the same pace as the West, and that is because they never had the means todo so. We are still witnessing evidence that supports this thesis with the current pandemic that has hit the world, and with the unavailability of vaccines at a global level. Without entering the universe of economic systems and political forms, it is safeto assert that language always translates into a tangible reality. In order for capitalism to work in the midst of globalisation, a juxtaposition between West and East needs toexist, which may be the reason why political figures and public political discourse arereluctant in abandoning such a distinction. What is more, at a linguistic level it is a convenient and easy way to establish a connection based on common identity among individuals that are receivers of the discourse in object. It is the same strategy providedby the use of the inclusive we, yet this time it is not confined to national identity, but instead to a bigger scale that includes even individuals from different parts of the world.

In practice, it is the same principle under which the United States decided to help Western Europe with economic aid after World War II. The Marshall Plan was in fact not merely a benevolent act to help countries that had been destroyed by the war, but an attempt at exerting influence on these territories. This could be achieved by restoring their economies, so that they would not be politically unstable and thus susceptible to the perceived communist threat by the Soviet Union (Cox & Kennedy-Pipe, 2005). It was once again an instance of contraposition between two 'factions' or the two superpowers of the world, namely, the United States and the Soviet Union. It seems indeed as if throughout history humankind has needed to compartmentalise the world into categories, whether it be based on religion, cultures, races, and this becomes tangible through language. Language, then, frames the event in object and its framing becomes embedded in the way we remember or depict it, which is why a constant contraposition between Orient and Occident may be dangerous. The way events are framed through language is thus crucial. For instance, even the concept of 'Cold War' could be doubted from a linguistic point of view. In fact, events never escalated to a direct military confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, which shows that the term 'war' may not be the most appropriate, as it provides a different perception of what actually happened. What is more, 'cold' refers to a type of war that

is mostly deprived of engagement in direct and open conflicts, and in which diplomatic relations were interrupted. However, this is factually untrue, as there are infinite instances of conflicts in which both the United States and the Soviet Union participated that are usually known as proxy wars. In addition, diplomatic relations may have been distant throughout the Cold War, but they were not completely absent: there were several encounters and visits between political figures from both powers after World War II.

To summarise, the way we use language to frame issues or historical events is of vital importance to guarantee that they are engraved correctly in the collective memory, and they respect the individuality of each culture or social group. When that does not occur, we may be in a field in which Orientalism, Us versus Them dichotomy, East-West dualism all become linguistic strategies used to establish power relations in the world, which is what recent approaches are interested in. As a result, regarding public political discourse, it is important to analyse all texts and speeches that we receive in a critical way, as the most prevalent linguistic and political biases become manifest through language. In the United States there have been a high number of instances in which it is possible to observe why linguistic strategies in public speeches by former presidents have been effective, so much so that they have become examples of diplomatic excellence. Based on the usual linguistic devices used, it is possible to identify two different trends concerning political discourse that may require attention in order to understand how language actually operates strategically, that is, conservative versus liberal.

2.2.3. Public Political Discourse: Conservative versus Liberal approach

Conservative and liberal are two terms that usually indicate dissimilar approaches to politics in a general way. Politically, they are often associated with disparate ways of seeing reality, and of conceiving typical issues. In addition, they are often linked with 'left' and 'right' parties, which again implicates different political thoughts. It is accurate to state that politics and language are intertwined and influence each other in a dialectical way. For the purposes of this dissertation, however, these two terms will only be considered as to indicate two approaches to political discourse production and strategic use of language. In fact, although this distinction may be risky and quite

contestable, it helps in systemically compartmentalising those strategies that are often used in conservative rhetoric, and those used in liberal rhetoric. It is also a great way to unite all the theoretical elements introduced until now, and proceed towards the practical aspects of political discourse.

First and foremost, when discussing conservative or liberal rhetoric, it is necessary to start from a simple premise. There is no right or wrong way of producing political discourse. There have been cases throughout history in which both approaches have resulted in successes regarding the expected outcomes, which usually converge in the gain of the approval from the mass public opinion. What is more, political figures that are usually associated with being more conservative may use rhetorical linguistic tactics that belong to the liberal tradition, and vice versa. The distinction is merely conventional and should be considered as a way to identify trends in the strategic use of language. It may not thus be that controversial to draw a distinctive line between conservative and liberal linguistic strategies.

The first difference between conservative and liberal discourses is a general one and concerns the complexity of language used. A complex, sophisticated, well-researched, and more complex language use is usually associated with liberals, while a simple, straightforward, unambiguous language use to conservatives. This is based on differences that concern the typical personalities and the ideologies of political leaders (Tetlock, 1981). Without casting any judgement on the content of his speeches, it is evident that former President Donald J. Trump is a prime example of how a simple and direct language can be effective in addressing a specific share of the general population. Part of his success in communicating is that the aim of his rhetoric is communicating in itself. Liberals, instead, tend to present multiple point of views and use more complex sentences, which may not reach the general public in an equally direct way. If the aim of conservative discourse could be identified as merely communicative and persuasive, that of liberal discourse could be seen as argumentative and lecturing. In recent times, however, discourse production has become simpler for both factions, as the need to reach the mass public has increased. This has been exacerbated by social media, which require a simplistic language, and the increased attention to political discourse by the media in general (Schoonvelde et al., 2019).

Other than ideological differences, it is the economic and political contexts in which the political leaders are operating that influence the way they speak. In times of

crisis, the urge to address and reassure the public entails the use of a type of language that is accessible to all individuals across the country. During the global pandemic caused by Covid-19, the language used by Prime Minister of Italy Giuseppe Conte was inherently and structurally straightforward, as the context required for new guidelines and information to be communicated easily and effectively. Consequently, shifting from simple to complex language may be required by the context, but also be a clear strategy used by political leaders. Political leaders may need to address a part of the population that presents specific profiles related to literacy, interest, way they consume information, and thus pick a simpler language over a more complex one. As Caprara and Zimbardo (2004: 584) state, politicians should learn first and foremost to "speak the language of personality by identifying and conveying those individual characteristics that are most appealing at a certain time to a particular constituency." What this means is that the focal point of persuasive language is that it should reflect the individual and personal characteristics of receivers, which is why over time greater attention has been focused on surveys and data about mass public opinion.

As it is based on ideological divergences, linguistic production in political discourse may vary based on what conservative and liberal thinking is usually interested in (Lakoff, 2002). This is why conservatives will favour words that pertain to the realm of 'authority' and 'responsibility'. A clear example is the repetitive use of the slogan 'law and order' used by Donald Trump in his presidential campaign. Law and order is in fact an expression that holds great political weight in US history, as it was used perpetually throughout history to appeal to a certain demographic, which is white people. This is once again because it recalls topics and arguments that are typical of conservative thinking, such as a higher militarisation of police or a criminal system that harshly punishes those who commit crimes. On the opposite side, liberals will prefer and use words that recall their political thinking, which usually pertains to the realm of 'human rights' or 'social responsibility'. A clear example is when liberal political leaders visibly include and address individuals that belong to what are usually considered 'minorities' in their speeches such as women, the LGBTQIA+ community, black people, and so forth. Once again, in order to be effective, persuasive language should resonate with the personality of receivers.

Even if the focus of the analysis is on discourse and since ideologies influence linguistic production, it may be useful to analyse a general theory proposed by Haidt

and Joseph (2012) that focuses on the typical interests of conservative versus liberal thinking, namely, the moral foundations theory. This is a theory that derives from psychological studies in the social field, and that has been applied to political ideology. The basis is that there are five macro categories according to which the moral concerns of individuals vary: harm-care, fairness-reciprocity, in-group-loyalty, authority-respect, and purity. Firstly, the dichotomy harm-care focuses on the assertion that harming people is wrong, while taking care of them is good. Secondly, fairness and reciprocity focus respectively on the idea that justice is good and should be strict, and individuals should have rights that are respected in social interactions. Thirdly, in group-loyalty is the moral attention given to loyalty or betrayal of a particular group one belongs to, which is linked to ideals of nationalism and patriotism. Then, authority-respect is the moral concern posed on the fact that there exist social hierarchies that need to be respected. Finally, purity (or sanctity) is the association of actions to being 'sinful' or not. A sixth dimension was added later by Haidt and concerned the dichotomy between liberty and oppression.

What research has shown is that liberals are often more interested in the liberty-oppression, harm-care, and fairness-reciprocity dichotomies, while conservatives favour equally all six dimensions. This is why liberals may seem more interested in topics that concern equality, or the suffering of individuals, and so forth. This research certainly has implications concerning diverging political ideologies, and subsequent use of language too. It would also explain why liberals may see some approaches to specific issues of their counterparts as 'immoral', and vice versa. If the results of this study were to be applied to current times, then it would be evident that there are specific issues in which this theoretical framework becomes clear. In fact, a great example is one of the hot topics in current debates, which is abortion. Discussions around abortion are divisive as the arguments supported by typical conservative thinking are fundamentally diverse than those proposed by liberal tradition. In fact, while liberals may focus more on the rights of women to have control over their bodies, which is a typical feminist approach focused on equality, conservatives may concentrate on the fact that life is sacred and should not be interrupted at any point. Consequently, when discussing the issue, the language of conservative political figures will be more balanced towards a religious approach to the issue, for instance, while that of liberals towards a human rights approach.

Research conducted by political psychologists and linguists also shows how conservatives may be more prone to using nouns and noun phrases in their speeches as they are indication of a more abstract language (Cichocka et al., 2016). When describing a group of people, in fact, using a noun rather than an adjective facilitates a process by which it is the receiver that attributes characteristics to that specific group rather than the word. As a consequence, this may fuel the process of formation of stereotypes on the group in object. The cognitive effects of the use of nouns do not only concern negative representations of the other, but also self-perception. Studies have shown how using noun phrases to describe preferences may show that they are grounded, stronger and more enduring (Walton & Banaji, 2004).

In brief, as demonstrated, language and politics are unequivocally intertwined. The way in which political leaders choose to structure and embellish their discourses depends on various linguistic strategies, and on contextual and ideological constraints. Linguistic strategies help political leaders address the share of the constituency that they aim at persuading, and create a condition in which they feel represented and heard. Based on the linguistic strategies used and on the ideological premises, it is possible to draw a comparison between conservative and liberal trends in political discourse. This may vary over time, may blend, and may not be that precise, yet it still helps better identifying the underlying meanings in discourse production. In practice, there have been a high number of cases that have shown how successful communicative strategies can be, and the extent of the effects they may have on public opinion. In theUnited States, strategic language usually becomes evident in speeches or texts produced by political leaders, and especially presidents. It may thus be useful to analyse a prime example of successful and effective communicative strategies, whichis the case of Obama.

2.2.4. Effective Political Communication: Obama's First Inaugural Address

The presidency of Barack Obama represented a pivotal turning point in the history of the United States and of the world. His victory against Republican nominees John McCain, and later Mitt Romney was a historic moment, as he was the first African American president in the history of the United States. Countless studies have been conducted on why he was chosen as the 44th president of the United States. There are certainly contextual elements of the socio-political condition of the US at that time,

and elements of his individual background and personality that contributed to his success. Nevertheless, great attention was given to his communicative strategies, which have undoubtedly struck a chord in the hearts of mass public opinion. As American presidents always do, after a hard-fought campaign and electoral battle against his opponents and after winning, he gave his first inaugural address on January 20, 2009. The first speech by a newly elected American president is fundamental, as it sets the tone for how the presidency is intended to be conducted. This particular speech presents all the characteristics explained until now, and it may be useful to underline that former president Obama conventionally falls under the liberal category. In order to provide an extensive analysis of a speech, it is necessary to evaluate it under three aspects, as proposed by Critical Discourse Analysis: the socio-historical dimension, the textual dimension, and the interpretative dimension.

First and foremost, the socio-historical dimension of that election cannot neglect the fact that the winner was an African American individual, which was a ground-breakingnot only for the United States, but for the world as a whole. In fact, as stated by Obamahimself during the speech (2009)[1], "a man whose father less than 60 years ago might not have been served in a local restaurant can now stand before you to take a most sacred oath." The remembrance of the values and principles of equality among races proposed by Martin Luther King Jr. in such a distinct way had in fact never been seenbefore at such a high institutional level. What is more, politically the United States were exiting a presidency that actively participated in the war in Iraq with Republican President George W. Bush along with military missions in Afghanistan. What is more, economy was considered to be in the worst crisis since the Great Depression. Economic crisis and political instability may as a result have exacerbated the distrust between constituency and Republican party. As it often happens, the appearance of a fresh political figure that was able to appeal both to younger and older audiences through language and promises is what led him to victory.

As concerns the text production and interpretative dimension, in his first inaugural address former President Obama used a language that was formal, emphatic but still not complex, in order to be understood by the general public. If the speaker of the text was unknown, it would still be clear that the speech was given by a Democratic

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[1] For the purpose of the analysis here presented, all direct quotations will be taken from Obama's speech.

nominee, and a liberal. In fact, as he stated during his speech:

> What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility -- a recognition on the part
> of every American that we have duties to ourselves, our nation and the world; duties
> that we do not grudgingly accept, but rather seize gladly, firm in the knowledge that
> there is nothing so satisfying to the spirit, so defining of our character than giving
> our all to a difficult task.

Responsibility and reciprocity in duties and obligations is one of the *topos* in liberal political discourse, which he graciously attributes as tasks to be accomplished by every American. In addition, his speech mentioned repeatedly health care, the school system, equality, which are again all common ground for liberal political discourse. One of the rhetorical strategies extensively analysed in previous chapters is recurring in his speech, that is, the use of the pronoun 'we', which is commonly known as personal *deixis*. As Levinson (1983: 54-96) states:

> Personal deixis, or person deixis, concerns itself with the grammatical persons
> involved in an utterance: (1) those directly involved (e.g., the speaker, the addressee),
> (2) those not directly involved (e.g., those who hear the utterance but who are not
> being directly addressed), and (3) those mentioned in the utterance.

While in the presidential debates and previous speeches the aim was that of convincing the public that he was the right choice as the next president, and thus his personality and character were at the forefront, now that he has won the presidency all he needs is the support from the public opinion for his future endeavours. This is why he refers to himself with the pronoun 'I' only at the beginning, in cases such as "I stand here today humbled by the task before us" or "I thank President Bush for his service to our nation." None of these assertions concern him or his character. After that, the pronoun 'I' is never used again, and instead he shifts the point of view from that of an external actor, to someone who is part of the same society whom he is addressing. In fact, he does not aim at distancing himself from the American people, but instead at subconsciously reminding them that they are an active part of what is happening. This certainly creates an environment of unity and patriotism among listeners, which is the exact aim of the strategy. Under this approach the president shares the achievements

and failures he describes during his speech with the Americans and speaks on their behalf.

Another dimension which is of great presence in his speech is the practice of the Us versus Them dichotomy, where Them is never identified. In fact, statements such as "and for those who seek to advance their aims by inducing terror and slaughtering innocents, we say to you now that our spirit is stronger and cannot be broken - you cannot outlast us, and we will defeat you", or "our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some" are prime examples of that. First of all, there is never a personification of the threats described, meaning that there is a crime, but there is no criminal. In addition, in this speech 'us' is represented by the American people, while 'they' is represented by opposers to the core values of Americanism, the 'others', who are however never specified. What this creates is the opposite of what the president aims at establishing with the American constituency, which is distance. There is great distance between the Americans, "the risk-takers, the doers, the makers of things", and "those that prefer leisure over work, or seek only the pleasures of riches and fame". It should be noted that these are strategies both for creating familiarity with the audience, but also to create the premises for an applause, which is another huge dimension to the practice of public speaking.

There are in fact strategies used as something that is commonly known as 'claptraps', that is, to catch applause, which of course only belong to public speaking (Atkinson, 1984). The main strategy is undoubtedly the introduction of a clearly recognisable name, or person, as would be the father of former President Obama which he refers to during his speech, or the "Founding Fathers of America" who are not named, but still resonate with the audience. Then, lists of three objects or concepts that aim at resonating with the audience gives a sense of completion and unity of a categorisation and may evoke an applause in specific circumstances. What is more, using contrastive pairs based on the 'us' versus 'them' dichotomy or opposing nouns usually means positive self-representation and negative other representation, a great device to catch applauses. Other ways to attract applauses include intonation, simplistic language such as negative comments about the adversary or compliments, and pauses.

The speech given by Obama is indeed characterised by a typical rhythm that helps conveying the message in the most effective and familiar way. The use of

repetitions in statements such as "For us, they packed up their few worldly possessions [..] For us, they toiled in sweatshops […] For us, they fought and died" which still follows the 'rule of the three' helps create *pathos* around the anecdote that he is describing, or the mission and tasks he proposes to the American people. What is more, there are instances especially towards the end where his language shifts towards a more poetic approach, with the frequent use of metaphors. The discussion around metaphors is an extremely interesting one, as it is one of the main ways we decrypt reality in our daily lives. As George Lakoff (1980: 1) asserts, "Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature." This is why statements such as "We will harness the sun and the winds and the soil to fuel our cars and run our factories … All this we can do. All this we will do." resonates with the audience. Obama is referring to the energy that the US needs in order to foster the economic system, but he is describing it in a poetic and formal way, while simultaneously ending the sentence with the reassurance that there is not only the possibility of achieving that, but the certainty.

To sum up, language is unquestionably a tool to persuade the mass public opinion, and that becomes apparent in political public speaking. Understanding the structural and rhetorical building of political discourse allows us to critically interpret it and enter its underlying meanings, where all forms of power struggles, inequalities, strategies, or ideologies rise to the surface. Since Obama was a fairly recent president who could be associated with liberal thinking, or liberal strategies in discourse, it may be useful to provide an analysis of a speech given in the same context and thus under the same constraints, but with opposite conditions. President Eisenhower enjoyed his victory as the 34th president of the United States in 1953, and was a Republican, which allows us to associate him with a more conservative approach to political discourse. The comparison between the two may also provide the practical tools to understand how political leaders diverse in ideology address the nation.

2.2.5. A Different Approach to Communication: Eisenhower's First Inaugural Address

Inaugural addresses are fundamental as to establish the expected role of the next president of the United States. According to Greenstein (1974) the president serves as

1) a symbol of the nation; 2) an outlet for positive feelings regarding one's country; 3) a cognitive aid to symbolize and substitute for the complexity of the entire governmental apparatus; and 4) a means for individuals to vicariously participate in current events. The function of the president is indeed highly symbolic. There is an expectation of how the president should act which shapes how the president will act, and that is reciprocated in his first speech after the election. As in the case of Obama, in fact, it is not hard to notice that most of the speech is usually directed at explaining what the president expects of the citizens, while still maintaining relational proximity with the audience through the strategies explained previously. In order to analyse Eisenhower's inaugural address the same methodology will be used, namely, an analysis of the socio-historical context of the time, and a textual and interpretative analysis.

First and foremost, there is a simple and predictable premise that needs to be made. Analysing a speech by Obama and one by Eisenhower implies focusing on two different eras in history, which leads to a number of implications: different appearance of the international arena, different ideologies, different trends and habits, different institutions, and even different language. However, it is still possible to draw a comparison between speeches produced at different times in history, as the linguistic and rhetorical strategies used usually persist over time, even if they might slightly differ. What is more, the convenience of inaugural addresses for linguists is that the contextual constraints imposed by the formality of the situation remain exactly the same.

Concerning the socio-historical situation of Eisenhower's presidency, he became president in 1953. According to historians, even if the following statement should be taken lightly and would need an extensive analysis, the 1950s were an era of bipolarism between the two superpowers of the world, the United States and the USSR.Almost ten years had passed since the destruction of World War II, and Eisenhower'spredecessor Harry Truman undeniably fell in approval by the general public because of his endeavours with the Korean war. The United States were thus at the centre of what is commonly referred to as the Cold War, and the narrative of the Republican party was that Soviet spies were infiltrating the government. Although the 1950s from an economic point of view were not an era of crisis, and although the presidential campaign of Eisenhower encountered some obstacles, he was still able to gain an

overwhelming victory over his Democratic opponent, which he rarely mentioned during his campaign. Most of his campaign was in fact dedicated to criticising his predecessor and the Democratic party, and he maintained his popularity before and during his presidency, so much so that there was no doubt that he would be re-elected for a second term in 1956.

From the textual and interpretative point of view, the beginning of his speech, which sets the tone for how it will proceed, is probably the clearest sign that we are analysing a president that leans towards the conservative approach to language. In fact, as Eisenhower states at the beginning (1953)[2], "My friends, before I begin the expression of those thoughts that I deem appropriate to this moment, would you permit me the privilege of uttering a little private prayer of my own." He proceeds with a prayer that is dedicated to the American people, but also that involves them as an active part of it. As theorised, the dimension of sanctity and purity of the religious sentiment is typical of conservative approaches to strategic language. A prayer is perhaps the most effective way to engage with the audience and invite them, even physically, to participate to a speech. What is more, he presents religiousness and spirituality as a big part of his individuality, which resonates with the majority of the American people, and thus focuses more than Obama on the image he wants to portray of himself while still using the inclusive 'we'. The presence of religiousness is substantial throughout the whole speech, as demonstrated by statements such as "In our quest of understanding, we beseech God's guidance", or, "[…] in the watchfulness of a Divine Providence."

Another sign of conservative thinking is represented by the topics he focuses on throughout his speech in order to resonate with the audience. As any public political speech, this was written beforehand by experts in communicative strategies, and then the draft was reworked and finalised by Eisenhower with the addition of his personal prayer. As stated by Milic (1982: 53):

> His initial instructions were summarized on a scrap of paper containing the words 'Understanding, Heart and determination, Productivity, Readiness to Sacrifice – the must be universal – Leadership, political, industrial, church, school, labor – must develop the above.'

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[2] For the purpose of the analysis here presented, all direct quotations will be taken from Eisenhower's speech.

As he proceeds throughout his speech, he presents the historical events that the world was in at that time as a "pilgrimage", once again recalling a religious dimension. Continuing with this approach, he states that "Seeking to secure peace in the world, we have had to fight through the forests of the Argonne, to the shores of Iwo Jima, and to the cold mountains of Korea." History is presented as a kind of movie-like pilgrimage that conducts mankind from darkness to light.

It is interesting to notice how the use of the inclusive 'we' in his speech is inclusive of the American people, but also of the globe. As he states, "The faith we hold belongs not to us alone but to the free of all the world", which echoes the 'citizens of the world' concept proposed by Woodrow Wilson years before. The intended aim of the speech shifts thus from being directed to the American people, to being directed to the world. Of course, this is not a coincidence. This was a time in which rivalries with the Soviet Union were growing, and the aim of the United States was that of establishing its power and influence over the world. As he explained, the United States need the rest of the world as much as the rest of the world needs the United States. The *topos* of the United States as leaders of a free world has always been characterised by a strong presence in American political discourse. In this case, it was needed to highlight the difference in values and "philosophies", as he states, between the United States and the Soviet Union. However, once again, the Soviet Union is never addressed directly. In fact, the non-personification of the enemy is what creates distance between the American people (and the world) and the threat itself, the Soviet Union. It becomes clear that Eisenhower is speaking of the Soviet Union from the beginning because he nods at the new unprecedented scientific innovations of the time, with the nuclear power being the most dangerous. As he states, "Science seems ready to confer upon us, as its final gift, the power to erase human life from this planet", which is a way to assert both that the United States has the nuclear power to wipe humanity (probably addressing the Soviet Union), and that there is a clear unknown threat that could end humankind. The Us versus Them dichotomy is evergreen in public political discourse, but in this case, it is stronger and more global than ever, as the whole world needs to perceive the Soviet Union as an unstoppable monster ready to invade the world.

The language used by Eisenhower was rather simple, even though metaphors are still highly present, as they are the simplest way to decipher reality. After a number of

nods to the middle class and poorer share of the population, that is, "the men who mine coal and fire furnaces and balance ledgers and turn lathes and pick cotton and heal the sick and plant corn", Eisenhower proceeds with a list of fixed principles that he considers worthy of keeping as fixed values, so he basically envisions what his presidency would aim at achieving. Other than the more general principles concerning economic health, or political wisdom, Eisenhower focuses explicitly on the principle of repelling war as a tool solve disputes by stating that "The sole requisites for undertaking such effort are that - in their purpose - they be aimed logically and honestly toward secure peace for all." He continues by asserting:

> Honouring the identity and the special heritage of each nation in the world, we shall never use our strength to try to impress upon another people our own cherished political and economic institutions.

The reason why it is interesting that Eisenhower decided to explicitly state that this is not the way he intends to operate is that a few years later the United States would embark in one of the worst wars in its history, the Vietnam War. What is more, the instances in which the United States had already interfered with foreign governments and their political and economic structures is well-documented in what we today refer to as American imperialism. The image of the United States as saviour of the world that would help any country to maintain freedom and the right to self-determination is what the United States needed from the global public opinion at that time. In exchange of the help provided to these countries, Eisenhower states that "Likewise, we shall count upon them to assume, within the limits of their resources, their full and just burdens in the common defence of freedom." The underlying strategic aim of Eisenhower's speech was that of clarifying to the world which the right side of history was, and persuade it to join the bearers of freedom in "easing the sorrow of war."

The Vietnam was a prime example that led the mass global public opinion to understand that the United States may not always have the best intentions, as any other country. From a political discourse and diplomatic point of view, the Vietnam War was fascinating, as the strategy around the communication about the war and the negotiations to reach a peace agreement crossed more than one presidency, and thus more than one approach. In order to thoroughly and ultimately grasp the extent to

which language and politics are correlated, it might be useful to embark on the diplomatic journey that surrounded the Vietnam War by critically evaluating the political discourse production around it.

3. The Vietnam War: A Prime Example of Strategic Language Use in Public Political Discourse

This chapter will focus on a case study that encompasses all the theoretical aspects presented in the previous chapters, that is, the Vietnam War. The Vietnam War is a clear example of the relationship between strategic language and political discourse. It lasted twenty years and crossed four US presidencies, which allows an extensive analysis on the way negotiations were publicly and secretly conducted, and how American political leaders presented it to the mass public. After an historical introduction of the main events of the Vietnam War, including its peace negotiations, the chapter will focus on analysing speeches from American presidents at different points of the conflict, in order to understand how the conflict was strategically communicated to the general public and to the world. Finally, a reflection will be presented about the ways in which the Vietnam War was engraved in the collective memory of Americans and of the world, and how it is remembered by political leaders today. The aim of this chapter is to provide a practical analysis of how the relationship between strategic language use and political discourse concerning specific historical event is as important as the event itself.

3.1 The Vietnam War: Introductory Remarks on "America's Longest War"

> Men cannot be our enemies — even men called "Vietcong!" /
> If we kill men, what brothers will we have left? /
> With whom shall we live then? (Hanh, 1967: *Condemnation*)

Thich Nhat Hanh was a Vietnamese Buddhist poet who was arrested and tortured during the Vietnam War in the 1960s. He was a clear opponent to the Vietnam War, and an activist for peace, so much so that he was nominated by Martin Luther King Jr. for a Nobel Peace Prize in 1967. He is also one of the most influential figures on the Western perception of Buddhism (Mydans, 2022). Although history is often told through the eyes of political leaders or prominent historical figures, it is important to remember that behind the greatest leaders in the world there is a huge number of individuals that contribute just as much. His story is only one of the many that rarely rise to the surface when discussing tragic historical events. In fact, the Vietnam War

is a prime example of how certain narratives are excluded from the description of history, which is a concept that refers to the issue of Orientalism presented in previous chapters. The Vietnam War became indeed a popularised historical event that is engraved in collective memory, yet it was often presented throughout the conflict and after it in a one-sided way, that is, the American side.

Starting from the name of the conflict itself, it may be interesting to observe that in general there are specific rules and conventions to name historical wars. They may be named after the enemy based on the point of view taken, after both parties, or after leaders of the war, such as the Napoleonic Wars. They may also be named after the cause of the conflict, after the amount of time they lasted, such as the Thirty Years War, or by using code names (Hickman, 2011). There are a set of approaches that can be taken to name a war so that they become popularised and framed in collective memory, or in history books. For instance, the Cold War instantly brings to mind the contentious relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union after World War II. However, as already analysed, naming the Cold War as such may be controversial since it was never a "cold" war in actuality.

Framing wars under a specific light gives meaning to the war itself, and it certainly favours one of the parties. What is more, the name of the conflict can change over time, meaning that during the time of the conflict it may be referred to in one way, and then changed based on the response by the mass public. This dissertation has referred to and will refer to the Vietnam War as such conventionally, since the point of view taken is that of the United States. The aim is in fact to evaluate how American political leaders have spoken publicly about the war at the time and after, and to demonstrate how language can shape the course of events and the perception the public has on them.

As regards the Vietnam War, it has gained a set of names that have changed over time, all of which underline a specific aspect of the conflict. "The Vietnam War" or "The Vietnam Conflict" is the most common way to refer to the conflict in the United States. It clearly refers to Vietnam being the enemy, even if North or South Vietnam is never specified. What is more, since US Congress never declared war on Vietnam, it practically excludes the United States from the framing of the conflict, as if its participation in it was almost casual or unwanted. Even when the United States becomes central in the framing of the conflict, that is, when it is referred to as "America's Longest War", the focus is still on the long tragedy that the United States

had to endure (Lewis, 1973). If we compare this to the way it is usually referred to in Vietnam, the framing difference becomes evident. In fact, in Vietnam the conflict is referred to as "The American War" in some cases, but mostly as "The Resistance War to Save the Nation", which gives a completely different perspective of the conflict (Burns, 2018). The conflict was indeed seen as the perpetuation of a fight for independence that Vietnam had endured against a number of countries, France being the main one. Consequently, framing the Vietnam War as a fairly normal or common conflict, or framing it as an independence war from colonial power entails highly different implications.

So, the role that language plays in political discourse becomes crucial since the beginning stages of the analysis. An aspect as simple as naming a conflict can in fact become a strategic way to influence the perception of the public and framing the conflict under a convenient light. What is more, the constant repetition of such naming whether it be in history books, in public speeches, in movies, or in the media solidifies that perception in our collective memory. Framing the conflicts in terms of scale and magnitude should be the first phase to deconstruct linguistic biases and understand the importance of linguistic framing of events.

The Vietnam War was indeed a conflict of great magnitude. The human costs of almost twenty years of conflict were enormous both for Vietnam and the United States. Estimates amount to 2 million civilians on both sides, 1.1 million North Vietnamese and Viet Cong soldiers and 200,000 South Vietnamese soldiers. Countries that participated even shortly to the conflict such as Australia, South Korea or New Zealand also lost hundreds of lives (Hosch, 2010). Since the war was fought mainly in Vietnam, large parts of its territory were destroyed by bombs, which led to the industrial apparatus and business being disrupted. On the side of the United States, the defeat was not as much material as it was moral and figurative. In fact, the electorate (mass public opinion) became divided, and the war became one of the most controversial in the history of the United States, even if fairly recent military actions of the United States could steal that title.

To sum up, historical events influence language and the way we perceive reality as much as the opposite. As demonstrated by CDA and the analysis on diplomacy and public political discourse, the relationship between language and political discourse is dialectical and innate. In order to deconstruct it, it is necessary to focus on how language is used strategically in relation to historical events, and in this case, conflicts.

To achieve that it is mandatory that the actual historical course of events (even if they are not the prime focus of the analysis) are thoroughly presented.

3.2 The Vietnam War: History, Diplomacy, and Strategy

The Vietnam War is a pivotal event in history with a complicated course of events, as it lasted almost twenty years. It is thus rich in historical meaning, but also a prime example of diplomacy and use of strategic language to influence mass public opinion, which was also crucial in this particular conflict. In current times, little accountability has been taken by the United States on the lessons that should have been learned since the Vietnam War happened. The focus is mainly on what the United States should have done differently to win the conflict, rather than on the nature of the conflict itself.

3.2.1 Vietnam After 1945: The Role of the United States in the First Indochina War

To understand the nature of the conflict, it is necessary to refer back to the years following World War II, mainly 1945-1948. The end of the Second World War saw the beginning of growing tensions between the United States and the USSR, generally referred to by historians as the "Cold War". Both "superpowers" were aiming at gaining control over key areas of the international arena, and started to participate in international conflicts, including the First Indochina War (1945-1955) between France and the Viet Minh Nationalist Forces (Herring, 2004). The Viet Minh was a communist national united front in Vietnam which was aiming at the independence of it. At that time the Viet Minh movement was indeed seeking to gain independence from the French colonial rule, and France to re-establish itself as a great power (Lawrence, 2008).

The role of the United States was based on a theoretical error, that is, the fear of Soviet expansion over the Third World. These were in fact the years of the containment strategy that the United States was so strict about, in order to prevent the spread of communism. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union had little to no interest in a territory that they could not control at that time, as the nationalist forces that were aiming at independence aimed at the creation of a country independent of any control. This was a mistake that the United States often made in relation to intervention in third

countries. For fear of Communist expansion, they would support colonial powers, and when the nationalist movement wanting independence would come to power, it would then obviously be influenced and helped by the USSR but not by the United States. What the First Indochina War was about, in fact, was not the expansion of communism, but nationalism (Katz, 1980). Once again, framing a conflict under the wrong light can lead to dangerous practical mistakes in the implementation of foreign policy strategies.

As a result, in fear of a potential "domino effect" of influence on other countries initiated by the Viet Minh revolutionary forces in North Vietnam, the United States under President Eisenhower provided military and financial aid to France in its attempt at restoring its colonial rule in the territory. After the defeat of France and the Geneva Accords of 1954, Vietnam was divided into the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the North and the Republic of Vietnam in the South, although it was stated that the demarcation line should not be in any way interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary (Jones, 2019).

3.2.2. Inside the Vietnam War: The Beginning of the Conflict and its Main Turning Points

In 1954 the Viet Minh took control of North Vietnam, which became a Communist state led by Ho Chi Minh. He carried out land reform and socialist policies in North Vietnam and restarted a national liberation struggle against the US-backed regime in Saigon. By 1964 he would confront the full weight of the US military machine. The Geneva Accords of 1954 also advanced the intention of having general elections in 1956 to reunify the country and decide which side would govern it. These never happened, as there was a widespread fear among the United States and South Vietnam that the popular Communist leader Ho Chi Minh would win (Levering, 2016).

In South Vietnam, instead, it was the anti-communist Ngo Dinh Diem that was appointed President with the support of the United States. Ngo Dinh Diem was a controversial figure from a religious point of view, and he was strict on opposing communism and its opponents even with force. In fact, in 1960 the National Liberation Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (NLF) was created, which would later become central in the conflict as the "Viet Cong" (Turse, 2013). Growing discontent by the United States led to a coup that overthrew and killed Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963,

a short time before the new President John F. Kennedy was assassinated, which led to a situation of political chaos. During his presidency, aid to South Vietnam and US military presence in the territory was highly increased based on the "Domino Theory", which asserts that if one Southeast Asian country falls under communist control, then the others would soon follow. Although a direct conflict under Kennedy's presidency was never reached, the same line was followed by Kennedy's successor, President Johnson, yet in a much stronger way (Tucker, 2011).

In fact, the true turning point happened in 1964 with the Gulf of Tonkin, an incident in which it was claimed that North Vietnamese forces had attacked American destroyers in the gulf. The harsh response to the incident was the clear escalation of the conflict to a direct one. The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution allowed in fact Johnson to start bombings and raids that would cover Vietnam and neighbouring countries with the aim of weakening North Vietnam. United States troops were also sent in much higher numbers in the territory, so much that in 1967 they amounted to nearly 500,000 soldiers, with the death toll rising too (Roberts, 1970).

By this point, the situation of American presence in Vietnam was starting to become unbearable to the eyes of the mass public opinion. Of course, Vietnam was not only Ho Chi Minh or Ngo Dinh Diem. Even before the beginning of armed struggle against Japanese forces in 1941, the Vietnamese Communist party had established itself as a strong presence both among city dwellers and in the countryside. To many Vietnamese, the war was only the last stage of a thirty-year struggle. Given the still prevalent tendency in the United States to think of the Vietnam War as an aspect of the Cold War, Pulitzer winning novelist Viet Thanh Nguyen has one of his Vietcong characters commenting that "Not to own the means of production can lead to premature death, but not to own the means of representation is also a kind of death" (Nguyen, 2015: Chapter 12).

3.2.3. "The Global 1968": Anti-Colonial and Anti-War Movements

The issue of representation of conflicts only from one point of view, which in this case is that of the United States, is vital and is one of the reasons that sparked the global social movements of 1968. In fact, 1968 is commonly known as the year in which a set of social movements started to spread in different parts of the world, of which some gained a global dimension, and others a national one.

As concerns the Vietnam War, Vasquez (1976) provided a clear overview of the birth and history of the anti-war movement in the United States. Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s a large majority of US citizens approved the United States involvement in Vietnam and its alleged – by the US government – rationale: defending a "free" and friendly country, South Vietnam, from the aggression of its northern communist neighbour and the Soviet Union. By 1962, the vision of US foreign policy as purely reactive was starting to be confuted, showing that the US had almost constantly expanded its reach (physically and militarily) since the 19th century: Vietnam was to be considered just another such aggression conducted in the belief that "liberty" could exist only if foreign countries conformed to US expectations.

This is the reason why from 1964-65, students started protesting what they saw as an immoral war of aggression waged by the United States onto a faraway rural country. The anti-war movement crossed at least four other social movements, ranging from the anti-colonial movements in the United States to the global students' movement. Black nationalists such as Malcolm X had spoken against the American involvement in Vietnam as early as the 1950s. By 1967 Martin Luther King had also thrown his full weight against the war, where a disproportionate number of African Americans were serving. The importance of organising a web of social movements that opposed the war became crucial for the course of the events that followed.

The movement became so potent that by 1968, particularly after the Tet offensive, the anti-war movement had become a mass movement all over the country, bringing together motives from both the struggles of African Americans and those of campus students. Early during 1968, the domestic opposition to the war *de facto* forced President Lyndon B. Johnson to announce he would not run for a second mandate.

3.2.4. Towards the End: The Tet Offensive, Nixon, and "Vietnamization"

On January 31, 1968, a substantial number of military forces belonging to North Vietnam decided to launch the so-called Tet Offensive, which was a set of attacks on a large number of cities in South Vietnam. South Vietnam, backed by the United States, responded quickly and attacked back. What is more, despite repeated assertions in the United States that victory in the Vietnam War was soon to come, there was another increase in the request for American troops in the territory (Elliott, 2010).

As the elections were approaching and public opinion felt strongly that the war was useless and destructive, Johnson decided to stop the bombings, but also not to run for a second mandate. In 1968, in fact, the presidency belonged to the newly elected Republican Richard Nixon. Nixon adopted a line of thought called "Vietnamization" (Miller, 2020). It basically meant trying to "silence" the anti-war movements by focusing on those who supported the war. The policy attempts included the withdrawal of American troops, an increase however in the bombings of North Vietnam, and more military and financial aid to South Vietnam. The following years of the conflict were more brutal than ever, with the killing of civilians, soldiers becoming more and more distraught by the situation, mistrust in the presidency and its effectiveness, and so forth.

However, it is under Nixon's presidency that the peace talks among a number of actors involved in the Vietnam War flourished. An agreement after the long Paris Peace Talks was reached in 1973, and even though the conflict continued even after, in 1976 Vietnam was unified and became the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The effects of the Vietnam War were disastrous from a material and figurative point of view. Materially, the United States spent billions of dollars for the war, which led to an economic crisis accentuated by the oil crisis in the years after the end of the war. What is more, figuratively, the war had destroyed the principle by which the United States was an invincible country, leader of the free world (Grinter, 1975).

In order to evaluate the public political discourse around the Vietnam War from 1953 to 1975, it is necessary to highlight once again that the socio-historical context that CDA values so much is fundamental for a thorough analysis of strategic language during that time. In fact, public opinion, socio-historical conditions, individuality of American presidents, and so forth, are all elements that have been analysed and that contribute to the analysis of how language and politics interact. To complete the contextual framework, it is necessary to focus on the years that led to the Paris Peace Accords, namely, the peace talks and treaties that intended to end the Vietnam War.

3.3 The Paris Peace Talks: Track Two Diplomacy in Practice

The Paris Peace Accords are the peace treaties that were reached to end what is commonly known in the West as the Vietnam War and in Vietnam as the American

war. The Second Indochina War began in 1955, and the negotiation processes led to the Paris Peace Accords, signed by the United States, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), the Republic of Vietnam, and the Republic of South Vietnam on January 27, 1973. International and domestic pressure, also caused by anti-war protests in the United States pushed President Johnson to resign, and resulted in the beginning of public and backchannel peace talks between the United States and the DRV, then perpetuated by President Nixon and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger from 1969 on. In particular, the secret negotiations between Kissinger and Secretary General of the Communist Party Le Duan highly contributed to the closing of the Paris Peace Accords in 1973, yet not to the end of the war.

When analysing negotiation processes, it may be useful to divide theanalysis into a number of steps: historical context and conflict, which was already analysed, actors involved, constraints, strategies or steps of the negotiation process, and final outcomes.

3.3.1 The Actors Involved in the Paris Peace Talks

The parties involved in the Paris Peace Talks were the United States, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam), the Republic of South, and the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam). However, the actors that truly shaped the outcome of the negotiations and led to the achievement of the Paris Peace Accords were President Nixon and his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger on the side of the United States, and Le Duc Tho and Le Duan, respectively, Chief and Secretary General of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Therefore, the analysis will mainly focus on these actors.

As in most negotiations, the positions held by the actors hid numerous underlying interests. Lyndon B. Johnson's position, then perpetuated by his successor Richard Nixon, was to avoid the unification of Vietnam under communist rule. Le Duan and Le Duc Tho aimed at creating a communist unified Vietnam, and therefore removing US military presence from South Vietnam (Spector, 1998).

President Nixon's underlying interests stemmed directly from the already unstable international relationship between the United States and the USSR: in fact, fearing communist expansion and its potential "domino effect", Nixon and his predecessors deemed it necessary to intervene in the war in Vietnam (Kogan &

Sebenius, 2016). On the other side, Le Duan and Le Duc Tho were particularly interested in spreading the communist revolution, not legitimizing the sovereignty of South Vietnam, and putting an end to the imperialist agenda, that was in this case perpetuated by the United States (Pribbenow, 2003). One underlying interest that both parties shared was the need to "save face", both internationally and domestically (Fisher & Ury, 2011). Saving face during an international negotiation is a fundamental concept that may also be linked to the strategic use of language, and in this case to how the negotiation is presented strategically to the public. What it means is that actors are extremely interested in not losing credibility and prestige to the eyes of their constituencies and of the world.

3.3.2. Constraints, Strategies, and Steps of the Negotiation Process

During the negotiation process the constraints and obstacles were multiple: on the one hand, "losing face" was not acceptable for all actors involved for different reasons. President Nixon and his predecessors could not show signs of weakness both internationally, namely, vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and China, and domestically, especially in terms of audience costs (Wanis-St. John, 2006). On the other hand, Le Duan and North Vietnam as a revolutionary force could not afford "imperialist" America to further its political agenda by occupying South Vietnam (Pribbenow, 2003).

Another constraint were the different positions that often led to deadlocks in the negotiation. In this regard, positions were influenced also by the presence of the USSR and China, whose support was sought by both negotiating actors (Kogan & Sebenius, 2016). Other elements of influence, especially for the US, were the anti-war Congress that Nixon had to face after his election in November 1968, and the ever-growing pressure of anti-colonial and anti-war movements (The Nixon Centre, 1998). A clear example of obstacle during the negotiation was the behaviour of Le Duc Tho and Le Duan as spoilers in the bargaining process right before the American elections of November 1972 (Wanis-St. John, 2006). If at first they pushed to end the negotiations before the elections, aiming at receiving maximum concessions from President Nixon, they then made the strategic decision to spoil and stall the negotiations, which led to the Christmas bombings of December 1972 (The Nixon Centre, 1998).

The actors framed the initial conflict in different ways. On the one side, during the first informal negotiations from 1965 onwards Johnson adopted a soft kind of bargaining, making concessions in order to achieve peace. On the other side, Le Duc Tho and Le Duan pursued a hard negotiating strategy, committing themselves to their demands and refusing to make concessions (Pruitt, 1991).

During the formal peace talks, started in 1969, both parties adopted a more competitive and contending strategy in the negotiations, causing many setbacks in the process. The lack of progress led both parties to engage in backchannel negotiations, thus limiting the effects of spoilers (Wanis-St. John, 2006). In fact, the turning point in the negotiations was the strategic change of Le Duc Tho during the secret negotiations towards a softer contending strategy, which is what eventually led to the draft of the Peace Treaty in October 1972 (Kogan & Sebenius, 2016).

The steps of the peace negotiations extended over a long period of time and were characterised by many setbacks. The very first peace proposal, which led to a major setback in the negotiation process was made by North Vietnamese Premier in April 1965, who demanded a return to the Geneva provisions of 1954, the withdrawal of US personnel from South Vietnam and the halt of any US intervention in Vietnam. This proposal was dismissed by the US Secretary of State, who believed this would mean allowing North Vietnam to gain control over the South (Brigham, 1995). The following year, secret efforts for a peace agreement between the US and North Vietnam were made in what was called the "Marigold Operation" even by third parties, namely, Italy and Poland backed by the Soviet Union. However, they once again only led to a stall, since the parties never actually met (Hershberg, 2012).

Although both parties publicly claimed to be open for peace talks, they never actually committed to it, at least until they met in Paris in May 1968. In this context, the first demands by representatives of both parties were clear: Viet Cong activities in South Vietnam should de-escalate and the US should stop bombing operations over Vietnam. Shortly before the election of Nixon as US President, President in office Johnson agreed to stop bombings over North Vietnam, thus allowing the official peace negotiations to start in January 1969 (Hershberg, 2012).

Since little progresses was made due to different positions, Nixon and Le Duan started to engage in backchannel negotiations in August 1969, led by Henry Kissinger and Le Duc Tho and without the participation of South Vietnam (Kogan & Sebenius, 2016). The first progress was made after North Vietnam lost the Easter

Offensive against South Vietnam and US forces in 1972. North Vietnamese leaders thought that successfully attacking South Vietnam would have increased their bargaining power in the negotiations and influence the incoming US presidential elections (The Nixon Centre, 1998). Since the operation did not go as planned, both parties began to undertake a less competitive approach. Le Duc Tho expressed to Kissinger the North Vietnamese willingness to make concessions, and particularly to finally recognise the government of South Vietnam (Hickman, 2020).

The draft of the agreement was made public by Kissinger in October 1972 and was generally seen by constituents as a huge milestone after years of failures and deadlocks. However, South Vietnamese President Thieu was firmly opposed to signing the agreement, as he feared it would give North Vietnam too much control over the South. This discouraged Le Duan and Le Duc Tho to finalise the peace accord, further stalling the negotiations and creating another deadlock. In order to push North and South Vietnamese representatives to sign the agreement, Nixon and Kissinger launched a series of strategic military attacks in the region from December 17 to December 29, 1972 known as the "Christmas Bombings". In the aftermath of the attacks which earned both Nixon and Kissinger more bargaining power, they resumed negotiations with North and South Vietnam, and induced them to sign the accord, which came into effect on January 27, 1973 (Kogan & Sebenius, 2016).

3.3.3. The End of a 20-year Conflict: Final Outcomes of the Paris Peace Talks

The Second Indochina War had disastrous consequences for all parties involved: the official estimate of war dead amounted to 2 million civilians and 1.1 million North Vietnamese and Viet Cong fighters in Vietnam, while the US counted 58.200 deaths among members of the US armed forces. Moreover, the conflict left Vietnam with a major economic and political crisis, which resulted in the exodus of a great number of Vietnamese civilians between the 1970s and 1990s (Spector, 1998).

The Paris Peace Accords called for a long series of provisions. Among the main ones were the withdrawal of all US and allied forces from Vietnam; a cease-fire in South Vietnam and the delineation of communist and government zones of control; the establishment of a "National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord" to implement democratic liberties and organize free elections in South Vietnam; a ban on the introduction of war material and further military personnel in South Vietnam; and

US financial aid to alleviate war damages throughout Indochina (The Department of State Bulletin, 1973). Soon after the agreement was signed on January 27, 1973, North Vietnam continued to build military power and attacked South Vietnam in April 1975, thus violating the accord. The unification of Vietnam under communist rule did not result in the "domino effect" of spreading communism feared by US Presidents (Spector, 1998).

Despite Nixon's promises to continue supporting South Vietnam militarily, the Paris Peace Accords successfully removed US military forces from the region. However, the war in Vietnam was far from over. The subsequent conflict in Vietnam was influenced also by the fact that the United States eventually stopped intervening, since Nixon was concerned with the Watergate Scandal which eventually led to his resignation in August 1974 (Kogan & Sebenius, 2016).

In conclusion, by comparing the initial situation of the negotiation process and the outcome of the Paris Peace Accords, it is safe to say that the US did not acquire the status it expected. Although Kissinger was awarded the Nobel Prize for peace in September 1973, President Richard Nixon failed in his and his predecessors' attempt at avoiding "losing face". In fact, contrary to what President Eisenhower expected, the Vietnam War came to be known as "America's longest war", namely, the worst military and diplomatic failure in recent US history which weakened the hegemonic role of the US in the aftermath of the conflict.

On the contrary, North Vietnamese leaders succeeded in their initial objective of unifying Vietnam under communist rule and removing US military presence from the region. Moreover, the strategic analysis proposed made clear how different positions come into play and how external and domestic factors can influence the actors' positions in the negotiation process.

The Paris Peace Accords can indeed be considered a prime example of the decisive role of backchannel negotiations in peace processes, yet also of how this negotiating tool seems to produce its maximum benefits in the short term rather than in the long run. Backchannel negotiation ease the negotiation process, but complicate the implementation of the agreement and the communication of the solution reached to the constituency. As a result, it will be interesting to evaluate how the American presidents involved in the negotiations around the Vietnam war presented the conflict and the agreement to the general public, and to the world through strategic public political discourse.

3.4 American Diplomacy: A Chronological Analysis of the Public Political Discourse on the Vietnam War

The Vietnam War may be remembered as one of the most controversial events in the history of the United States, as it belongs to an American tradition that presents the United States as leaders of the free world to this day. This perception is what pushed American leaders to think that it would be necessary to intervene in conflictual situations in Southeast Asia to stop the communist expansion of the Soviet Union. It was arguably the first time that the perception of the United States as bearer of freedom started crumbling not only at a domestic level, but globally too.

Like history, politics is first and foremost a story of perceptions. It is the perception of reality that shapes the public political discourse and policies of a particular country, as clearly demonstrated by the approach of the United States to Vietnam. Once the conflict is over, however, perception does not die. If during the conflict the aim is that of providing a specific perception of the event in object to the mass public, after the conflict the aim becomes to engrave a specific perception of the same event in the collective memory of the public. The result is an eternal political struggle, which can be defined "struggle" because it entails a continuous commitment to try to fit such an enormous national failure into the common American narrative, which is a hard task. It is the same reason why Germany is still often remembered for its atrocities during World War II. Memory is important because it substitutes the historical reality of what actually happened, and it can be shaped through infinite tools such as the media, movies, books, and speeches, which is why it is important to consider all perspectives on an event, and not only one. The Vietnam War has in fact produced an infinity of rhetorical artifacts, all of which shape our perception of the conflict. Despite being uncertain and unpredictable, however, public opinion remains a crucial aspect of political discourse.

All of this is demonstrated by the fact that at the beginning of the conflict there was a widespread support for the growing conflict in Vietnam and the efforts of US presidents, which quickly changed after the conflict was becoming unbearable in the late 1960s (Sutton, 1994). The awakening of the American public came because efforts in hiding the atrocities that were being committed in the Vietnamese territory were starting to become evident, and ineffective. However, this opens the door for a set of questions that become fundamental when analysing international relations from

an "unconventional" point of view, by unconventional meaning not through history, but through language. The focus shifts from what happened to how what happened was reported to the public, and they are both of equal importance. In fact, the point of the dissertation is to analyse the Vietnam War through how it was portrayed in public political discourse through a strategic use of language.

Concepts such as Critical Discourse Analysis, diplomacy, public opinion, international negotiations, and so forth thus merge into a practical analysis of how language is used in public political discourse. The most effective way to achieve that is to follow the course of events in a chronological way, and evaluate how at different points of the conflict American political leaders addressed the Vietnam War, until the Paris Peace Aaccords were reached. Eventually, this will allow the possibility of assessing how the Vietnam War has instead been perceived years after the conflict, and until current times.

3.4.1. The First Acknowledgment of the "Domino Theory": Eisenhower's Press Conference in 1954

Dwight D. Eisenhower became president in 1953 and he served until 1961, which means he kept the oval office during the onset of the Vietnam War. He also became president in a time in which the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union was rampant. In fact, at that point the United States were not new to the practice of intervening in conflicts around the world, as his predecessor Harry Truman demonstrated with the Korean War.

The Korean War was fought between North and South Korea between 1950 and 1953 and saw the support of the USSR of the former, and the support of the United States of the latter. There are several approaches as to why the United States felt that it could intervene in this conflict, yet Harry Truman's words leave little doubt. "The attack upon Korea," Truman said, "makes it plain beyond all doubt that communism has passed beyond the use of subversion to conquer independent nations and will now use armed invasion and war" (Truman, 1955-6: 339). The common idea was in fact that of the Soviet Union having a clear mission to conquer independent nations and turn them into communist ones. The Korean War created wide discontent with the presidency of Truman, and was one of the points that Republican Eisenhower would

criticise during his presidential campaign, notwithstanding the fact that soon after he would be in the same situation (Park, 1983).

However, despite critiques to the presidency of Truman, the idea of the Soviet Union as an expansionary and illegitimate force was still perpetuated during Eisenhower's presidency. It would indeed become the basis of the next ten years of US history pertaining the Vietnam War. Eisenhower clarified his position about Vietnam and Southeast Asia during a press conference in 1954, only months after he was elected. To evaluate his words, it may be useful to proceed as usual following the methodology of CDA, that is, by analysing the socio-historical context, and then the textual and interpretative dimension.

As already presented, the socio-historical context was that of two superpowers in the world hostile to each other, and especially the United States being fearful that the Soviet Union would expand over independent countries. What is more, France was failing in its attempt to restore the colonial rule over the Vietnamese territory, which further increased the risk to the American eyes of a communist expansion. The linguistic context of Eisenhower's words is slightly different than a public speech. In fact, a press conference entails journalists asking questions to the president, which is a situation in which speakers have less control over the way they want to communicate with the public. However, it also provides the opportunity to clearly identify the strategic use of language, as it compartmentalises Eisenhower's thoughts and words in response to specific questions.

From the textual and interpretative point of view, first and foremost, this is the first communicative instance in which he coins the theory that would then become the basis of American foreign policy during the Vietnam War, that is, the "falling domino" principle. Answering about a question on the strategic importance of Indochina for the United States, Eisenhower (1957)[3] answers:

> First of all, you have the specific value of a locality in its production of materials that the world needs.
> Then you have the possibility that many human beings pass under a dictatorship that is inimical to the free world.

[3] For the purpose of the analysis here presented, all direct quotations will be taken from Eisenhower's press conference in 1954.

Finally, you have broader considerations that might follow what you would call the "falling domino" principle. You have a row of dominoes set up, you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly. So you could have a beginning of a disintegration that would have the most profound influences.

The first thing to notice in this section of his answer is the way he decides to frame (and framing is fundamental, as already demonstrated) specific actors and events. After admitting that there would be an economic interest in the territory concerning the specificity of the production of materials that the world would need, he clearly states that there is a possibility that many human beings could fall under a dictatorship that is dangerous for the "free world".

The concept of the United States as leader of the free world is the focal point of any analysis concerning the relationship between language and American political discourse. In fact, it is a perception that has been proposed by US presidents for ages, from Thomas Jefferson to Donald Trump. Under this perspective the free world can be identified in any country that accepts capitalism as its economic and political system. The task of the United States would indeed become that of bringing other countries into this system, yet not exactly for freedom purposes. In fact, since it was a phrase that was extensively used during the Cold War, the aim was that of avoiding communism and the Soviet Union from expanding. For the first time, the propaganda around the United States was clearly a universal agenda (Wills, 1999).

However, it was presented to the constituency as something that needed to be done to avoid human beings from falling under a "dictatorship". The choice of the word dictatorship is strategic too. It may have been a hazard to refer to the Soviet Union as a dictatorship, yet this is why this rhetoric worked, at least at the beginning. The full extent of the damage that a dictatorship can cause had been clear from World War II, and thus it was important to persuade the public to think that that should be avoidable at any cost. What is more, he speaks about "human beings", not specifying any belonging to a specific country, which gives the perception of that being a global mission. Finally, the *topos* of not mentioning the "enemy" by name still recurs, as the threat should be perceivable but not evident.

According to Eisenhower, the "domino theory" is what would happen if the Soviet Union expanded too much over Southeast Asia. Other countries would fall

under Soviet control, and that would have the "most profound influences". The rhetoric of the domino theory would become the basis for the American involvement in the Vietnam War in the following years. This conference happened indeed on April 7th 1954, and days later the talks that would lead to the Geneva Accords of 1954 would begin, which undeniably changed the situation.

It is necessary to mark one more time how the issue of Vietnam was framed in the beginning stages with respect to the world. Answering a question about whether the independence of Indochina should be granted in order to justify an intervention there, Eisenhower answered that "no outside country can come in and be really helpful unless it is doing something that the local people want". In fact, "the aspirations of those people must be met, otherwise there is in the long run no final answer to the problem". What analysing the political discourse around an issue allows is to then compare it to what actually happened in the following years, that is, that thousands of civilians were killed from both sides, which certainly does not reflect their beginning aspirations. In fact, disguising American intervention in Vietnam as an effort to help its people to gain their independency colludes with the original aspiration of Vietnam itself, which was to quickly unify the whole territory under the same government. The United States did want the independence of Vietnam, just not under communist rule (Hanhimaki et al., 2015).

The legacy left by Eisenhower to the following president in 1961 is a situation in which there was a growing interest for the United States to become more and more involved with Vietnam. Firstly, Eisenhower supported the French in their efforts to re-establish themselves as a colonial power in the territory. Then, when the French were defeated, his administration refused to sign and abide by the resolutions in the Geneva Accords of 1954, and to support South Vietnam and its controversial president Ngo Dinh Diem. From a linguistic and interpretative point of view, he would communicate what was happening in Vietnam in a cautious yet decisive way, by making it clear to the American people and to the world that there were specific pillars of American values that would be respected at any cost, even at the costs of war.

This clearly demonstrates that the history of the American approach to colonialism in the post-war period is a history of ambiguity and paradox. The United States did play an active role in ending colonialism in some cases, but their policies and interventions were more focused on containing Soviet expansion in any way possible, rather than on granting the right to self-determination to every people, as

declared in the Atlantic Charter of 1941 (The Atlantic Charter, 1941). Following World War II and the post-war period, in fact, it was never clear who was truly deserving of this right in the eyes of US presidents and policymakers and who was not.

3.4.2. Following the Same Line: Kennedy's Speech About the Vietnam War in 1956

The socio-historical context pertaining to Kennedy's speech at the conference on Vietnam luncheon in Washington, D.C. on June 1st, 1956, is the same as that of Eisenhower's speech in terms of political and social conditions. However, it happened two years later, at a time in which Kennedy was not president yet, and Ngo Dinh Diem had already taken the office as President of South Vietnam with the support of the United States. What is more, since it is an aspect that should always be taken into consideration when analysing discourse, Kennedy's individuality played a big role into his political discourse.

In fact, in 1951 he visited Indochina and witnessed the First Indochina War between France and the Viet Minh revolutionary forces. Although he agreed with the principle of freedom from communist expansion, he criticised the methods employed by the French by describing them as too colonialist, something that tarnished the image of the West to those countries (Logevall, 2015). According to Kennedy, in fact, the aim was to show to instil a sentiment of anti-communism in those countries, rather than simply identifying it as the enemy. The aim would be to show that communism meant poverty for those countries, it would mean inequality, it would mean sickness.

The political discourse of Kennedy towards Vietnam shifted from idealism and pragmatism, and he kept his scepticism on the use of military forces in the territory in the following years, at least until he campaigned to become president, when he shifted towards more orthodox policies concerning Soviet expansion for political purposes. Early in the presidency in 1961, in fact, he stated that "if [Vietnam] were ever converted into a white man's war, we would lose it as the French lost it" (Schlesinger Jr, 1965: 547). His scepticism and uncertainty towards the Vietnamese territory quickly faded during his presidency, as in 1961 he agreed to increase financial support to the government of Diem in South Vietnam, increase its army, and add a great number of US military advisors in the territory. Nevertheless, his political discourse was always surrounded by idealism.

In 1956 Kennedy was a Congressman for the State of Massachusetts, and he spoke in Washington D.C. about the Vietnam War. Since it was a speech and not a press conference, he had full control of how he wanted to frame the issue and communicate it to the constituency. In addition, the conference was sponsored by the American Friends of Vietnam association of which he was part, which was created in 1955 in support of Diem's government in South Vietnam. The premises are thus already clear.

First and foremost, he begins by stating that it was a time in which public opinion and media attention were not focused on the situation in Vietnam, and he listed several reasons for this. The first reason he mentions is the "amazing success of President Diem in meeting firmly and with determination the major political and economic crises which had heretofore continually plagued Vietnam" (Kennedy, 1956)[4]. This is certainly due to the context of the speech, which was a conference held in support of Diem's government in South Vietnam. However, history and literature show how his government presented itself to the world as a democracy, but was in reality the exact opposite. In fact, Diem would persecute and even execute anyone who was suspected to be a communist, his government was filled with corruption, and there was no freedom of press. What is more, he would become famous and highly criticised towards 1963 because of his severe persecution against the South Vietnam's Buddhists, an instance that received high media coverage and contributed to his overthrow later that year under Kennedy's presidency (Toong, 2008). So, the decision to praise Diem's presidency was certainly strategic.

Another reason he highlights for the decreasing interest in the situation of Vietnam is an interesting one, and concerns the typical role of the United States as leader of the free world whose task is that of helping other countries achieve independency. In fact, he states:

> Third and finally, our neglect of Vietnam is the result of one of the most serious weaknesses that has hampered the long-range effectiveness of American foreign policy over the past several years - and that is the overemphasis upon our role as "volunteer fire department" for the world. Whenever and wherever fire breaks out -
> - in Indochina, in the Middle East, in Guatemala, in Cyprus, in the Formosan Straits
> -- our firemen rush in, wheeling up all their heavy equipment, and resorting to every

[4] For the purpose of the analysis here presented, all direct quotations will be taken from Kennedy's speech in 1956.

known method of containing and extinguishing the blaze. The crowd gathers -- the usually successful efforts of our able volunteers are heartily applauded -- and then the firemen rush off to the next conflagration, leaving the grateful but still stunned inhabitants to clean up the rubble, pick up the pieces, and rebuild their homes with whatever resources are available.

Firstly, from a linguistic point of view it is interesting to highlight how Kennedy chose to use a metaphor to explain the role that the United States had had until that point concerning foreign policy, as it simplifies its understanding. Also, there is the constant recurrence of the "rule of the three", which gives his speech a sense of conclusion and completeness. According to him, the role of the United States as saviour of countries that are under the threat of communism is necessary, but it is not the only one it should play. In fact, in line with the "domino theory", he believed that there needed to be action all over the world, meaning not only in Indochina, but in other places such as Africa in order to defeat the expansion of communism. That would be achieved not necessarily through the use of military force, but ideologically.

In fact, the nature of the discourse of Kennedy is one of idealism and pragmatism. From an ideological point of view, he framed the issue of communism spreading as a worldwide struggle for freedom (as per usual in American political discourse), which would entail intervening in any part of the world (not only Indochina) that would be threatened by communism. It was not a civil or military battle, it was a moral battle. From a pragmatic point of view, however, he explained that the United States would give attention to Indochina and intervene only "if it were in imminent danger of Communist invasion or revolution." The pragmatic aim should be instead that of considering the complexity of Vietnam's history, and its ties with the United States, and then propose practical and well thought-out policies. In additionto the "domino theory", this might be one of the reasons that led to an increase in American intervention in Vietnam in the following years (Bostdorff & Goldzwig, 1994).

A clear example of his position between idealism and pragmatism is the plan that he implemented with the government of South Vietnam in 1962, that is, the "Strategic Hamlet Program". In 1962 economic and military aid to South Vietnam was already increasing, and the program would be another step towards the elimination of influence of nationalist revolutionary forces in the territory. It consisted in isolating

the rural population from any contact with the National Liberation Front (The Vietcong) so that insurgencies would be stopped. However, the program was a great failure and it was cancelled after Diem was overthrown, which may be one of the reasons why the United States eventually decided that a direct military intervention would be better under Johnson's presidency (Tucker, 2011).

About "America's stake in Vietnam", Kennedy lists again a set of reasons that would explain why there should be interest in the territory, again by using a highly metaphorical language. He states that "Vietnam represents the cornerstone of the Free World in Southeast Asia, the keystone to the arch, the finger in the dike" and it "would be threatened if the Red Tide of Communism overflowed into Vietnam". Once again, communism and the Soviet Union are represented in this time of Cold War as the root of all evil, as a tide that will submerge the free world (as in the United States) and its affiliates all over the world. According to Kennedy "Vietnam represents the alternative to Communist dictatorship."

While metaphors are used to enhance the gravity of the spread of communism, they are also used to highlight the apparent friendly relationship between the United States and other parts of the world. In fact, Kennedy states that "If we are not the parents of little Vietnam, then surely we are the godparents. We presided at its birth, we gave assistance to its life, we have helped to shape its future." Comparing the development of a nation to the natural development that occurs in life is an odd yetsmart linguistic strategy. Resorting to the importance of family in political discourse has always been effective in stirring crowds, as it is an aspect of society to which we as humans give extreme importance. So, the United States become the godparents of Vietnam, which is part of the family. As such, "we cannot abandon it, we cannot ignore its needs". The need for involvement in the Vietnam War is compared to a basic human need, which makes it quite impossible to argue that maybe that would not be the best route. In 1961, as Kennedy gave his first inaugural speech, he continued with the same rhetoric by stating:

> To those people in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is required – not because the communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right. If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich… (Kennedy, 1961)

This means that the rhetoric of justification for the American intervention in foreign affairs is that of a "volunteer fire department" of which Kennedy talked in 1954, which demonstrates the several contradictions in the rhetoric itself. Intervening in Vietnam in 1961 (whether through aid or military presence) is a question of right or wrong, yet in 1954 it is to stop the "Red Tide of Communism". What this demonstrates is how language changes based on the contextual setting in which it happens. The first speech of 1954 was a conference about the support of the government of South Vietnam, and about the future of America's role in Vietnam, which means that the communicative aim would be that of supporting an intervention. The inaugural address of 1961 addresses the whole nation, and it has the purpose of enlisting the general and ideological aims of the incoming presidency, and persuading the constituency to agree with them.

Overall, the balance between idealism and pragmatism is what characterised Kennedy's rhetoric about the United States and Vietnam. His positions on the government of South Vietnam led by Diem changed in the beginning of the 1960s, and pushed him to decide to overthrow him in 1963, as he was not considered fit anymore to unify Vietnam. A short time later that year, sadly, he was assassinated and left the presidency to Lyndon B. Johnson. Although Kennedy may have prepared the foundation for a stronger intervention by the United States, the line followed by Johnson was an undoubtedly harsher one. It led indeed to the final escalation of the conflict with the dropping of a huge number of bombs over the North Vietnamese territory, and over a large period of time. It may thus be necessary to analyse how Johnson referred to the situation in Vietnam when the conflict had already taken a direct military dimension from 1964 onwards.

3.4.3. "War of Aggression" or "Asian Communism": Lyndon B. Johnson's PressConference in 1965

The socio-historical environment left by former President J. F. Kennedy to Johnson was one of growing tensions. After the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964, Johnson would decide that he had good enough reasons to start bombings over North Vietnam, and increase aid and military presence in the territory even more. In order to understand what the perspective of Johnson was on the effectiveness of the Vietnam War, it is important to remember the centrality of public opinion in political discourse, and in

foreign policy decisions. Publicly, he continued supporting Kennedy's line, and would state that he would be even harsher with his policies in Vietnam. Privately, however, he had a set of doubts that mainly concerned how the mass public would respond to such a long and crude conflict.

It should be noted that behind each political leader there are numerous other advisors or figures of political importance, which means presidents are subjected to a great deal of opinions, especially in situations in which it is not that clear what the best decision would be. In a conversation with Senator Richard Russell, chairman of the powerful Senate Armed Services Committee, Johnson expressed his doubts on how to proceed with the Vietnam War. As he stated:

> I'm confronted. I don't believe the American people ever want me to run [out on Vietnam]. If I lose it, I think that they'll say I've lost it. I've pulled in. At the same time, I don't want to commit us to a war. And I'm in a hell of a shape.
> […] I think that I've got to say that I didn't get in here, but we're in here by treaty [SEATO, Southeast Asia Treaty Organization] and our national honour's at stake. And if this treaty's no good, none of 'em are any good. Therefore we're there. And being there, we've got to conduct ourselves like men. (Johnson, June 1964)

What this demonstrates is the importance that public opinion was starting to have on the issue of Vietnam, and the indecision of Johnson concerning how to proceed. He wanted to look for an expedient to justify an eventual direct conflict in Vietnam, and at the same time ease public opinion on the matter. In this same conversation, he states that one of the things that an expert said to him is that "they'll forgive you for anything except being weak." America's history is one of prestige and strength, or at least this is the narrative, which means that a defeat cannot be accepted, and leaving Vietnam with no tangible results would be a clear defeat in the eyes of public opinion.

Concerning the subsequent framing of the conflict in Johnson's public appearances, which is fundamental, it is important to quote how Ho Chi Minh (President of North Vietnam) instead framed it. In a letter sent by Ho Chi Minh to the editor of *Minority of One*, an American magazine, he described the conflict in Vietnam as a "war of aggression" (Hillstrom, 2001). The aim of North Vietnam was in fact that of unifying the country under common rule, and he stated that the United States were interfering with this natural process, which would lead both to a loss of Vietnamese

lives, and an endangerment of the American reputation. He also calls for the American people and the anti-war movement that was starting to spread in American territory to push US leaders to withdraw American presence in the territory. However, that would not be the case, as the Gulf of Tonkin incident of August 1964 proved to be the right scapegoat for the conflict in Vietnam to escalate.

In fact, after the alleged attack on US he held an emergency speech addressing the American people in which he stated that "renewed hostile actions against United States ships on the high seas in the Gulf of Tonkin have today required me to order the military forces of the United States to take action in reply" (Johnson, August 1964). He however made clear that "We Americans know, although others appear to forget, the risks of spreading conflict. We still seek no wider war." Nevertheless, he ordered bombings on North Vietnam, and that is when the conflict escalated. The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution passed by congress days later practically allowed US military intervention in defence of Southeast Asian countries if they deemed it appropriate. Although it was not a direct declaration of war by the Congress, it allowed President Johnson and his successor Nixon to take any measure possible to "defend" these countries (Roberts, 1970).

So, in the following years Johnson's position on the Vietnam War was much more evident. He framed the situation in Vietnam in a completely different light from North Vietnam's President Ho Chi Minh. In July 1965, when the war had already escalated and bombings were still undergoing, he held a press conference in which he addressed the American people about the Vietnam War. He starts the speech with a powerful linguistic tool, which is a rhetorical question that he poses to himself after stating that he had received the same question from an American woman who was doubtful of the persistence of the war. From a linguistic point of view, then, it was a rhetorical question, but it was a question that represented the doubts of the entire nation, which is a great way to instantly involve listeners. "Why must young Americans, born into a land exultant with hope and with golden promise, toil and suffer and sometimes die in such a remote and distant place?", he asked (Johnson, July 1965)[5]. The juxtaposition between a land which is rich in hope and promises and one who is remote and distant instantly brings distance between listeners and Vietnam. The United States are the civilized country in the matter, Vietnam is not.

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[5] For the purpose of the analysis here presented, all the following direct quotations will be taken from Johnson's speech in July, 1965.

To answer his question, he states that this war "is guided by North Viet-Nam and it is spurred by Communist China. Its goal is to conquer the South, to defeat American power, and to extend the Asiatic dominion of communism", which is the opposite take with respects North Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh. The war thus becomes necessary: "We did not choose to be the guardians at the gate, but there is no one else." This is the rhetoric that the United States has perpetually used to justify intervention and interference in the business of foreign countries. The reason why from a communicative point of view it resonated most of the times with the American people is that conflicts were presented as "necessary", as fights for "freedom", as the only option available. He ends his speech by stating:

> As I have said before, that is what I have lived for, that is what I have wanted all my life since I was a little boy, and I do not want to see all those hopes and all those dreams of so many people for so many years now drowned in the wasteful ravages of cruel wars. I am going to do all I can do to see that that never happens.
> But I also know, as a realistic public servant, that as long as there are men who hate and destroy, we must have the courage to resist, or we will see it all, all that we have built, all that we hope to build, all of our dreams for freedom--all, all will be swept away on the flood of conquest.

This is the centre of American diplomacy and strategic use of language. If we do not engage in a war, we will lose everything we have worked towards until now. The focus is on the use of words that refer to this rhetoric such as "courage", "resist", "dreams", and "freedom". The contraposition between "I" and the "inclusive we" represents what he as president is going to do in order to guarantee that "we" do not lose "our" freedom against the "enemies" who want to "conquer us".

Although such a rhetoric worked in a number of cases throughout history, Johnson's escalation to a long war and increase in the military presence in Vietnamese territory was starting to become evident to the mass public, so much so that anti-war movements were starting to spread. In fact, towards the end of the 1960s global social movements concerning a great number of issues were starting to become popularised, and among these there were anti-war movements. The failed attempt to negotiate a peace agreement was the last straw for President Johnson, who started to quickly lose

public approval. In 1968 he decided indeed not to run for re-election, and left the presidency to Richard Nixon (Risen, 2008).

Nixon was the last president during the Vietnam War, and during his presidency the Paris Peace Accords were signed in 1975. It is important, however, to focus on the anti-war movements of the 1960s as they played a key role in the ending of the conflict. One of the most influential speeches of the time has remained in the American collective memory, and it is the speech that Martin Luther King Jr. (exponent of the civil rights movement) held concerning the long and tragic Vietnam War. It may be useful to analyse it to understand what made anti-war movements and public opinion so influential and powerful, so much so that they led to the subsequent end of the conflict.

3.4.4. "Beyond Vietnam": Martin Luther King's Speech Condemning the Vietnam War

The 1960s were the years that witnessed the widespread proliferation of global social movements. They ranged from students' movements concerning education issues, to workers' movements concerning exploitation and workers' rights, to feminist or LGBT movements. In the United States, it is safe to say that the most prolific were the Civil Rights Movement, and later the Anti-war Movement.

Martin Luther King had already established himself as a prominent figure of the civil rights movements fighting against the oppression of black people in America. On April 4, 1967 King made his first thorough and evident statement against the Vietnam War in New York City. As an individual leader of the civil rights movement, he had not pronounced himself before because of political pressures deriving from opposing the Vietnam War in such a public way. The civil rights movement was in fact reaching important milestones such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and there was fear that it would lose support by the government if such a prominent exponent of the movement would speak against US involvement in the Vietnam War. What is more, as the civil rights movement was an interracial movement between black and white people, the anti-war movement was predominantly white (Fairclough, 1984).

Nevertheless, he eventually decided to publicly denounce the growing US involvement in the Vietnam War in a speech that was as controversial as influential.

In the beginning of his speech, he outlined the reasons why he decided to speak against the Vietnam War and why this is relevant for his moral visions. "Tonight, however, I wish not to speak with Hanoi and the National Liberation Front, but rather to my fellow Americans", he clarified (King, 1967)[6]. The first section of the speech is in fact a predominantly historical account of how the United States decided to interfere with the situation in Vietnam. As he stated:

> We were taking the black young men who had been crippled by our society and sending them eight thousand miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in southwest Georgia and East Harlem. And so we have been repeatedly faced with the cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools. And so we watch them in brutal solidarity burning the huts of a poor village, but we realize that they would hardly live on the same block in Chicago. I could not be silent in the face of such cruel manipulation of the poor.

From the beginning of the speech, he makes it clear that there is a connection between the oppression of black people in America and the war, and likewise a connection between the civil rights movement and the anti-war movement. Also, the framing of the conflict is entirely diverse than that of US presidents. In fact, he frames it as a war of the poor that stand in "brutal solidarity" by attacking other poor villages in Vietnam. The *topos* of the United States as bearer of freedom is hereby completely shattered. "For nine years following 1945 we denied the people of Vietnam the right of independence", he states.

For once since each public speech by US political figures, the perspective taken is both that of the American, and the Vietnamese. "They watch as we poison their water, as we kill a million acres of their crops", or "So far we may have killed a million of them, mostly children", he asserts. In the analysis of previous speeches, the worry was that of addressing what the war meant for the United States and the American people, here it is instead clear that the perspective taken is that of both parties, as the war concerns both parties. This was a controversial speech for this exact reason, and King clarifies it perfectly: "Perhaps a more difficult but no less necessary

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[6] For the purpose of the analysis here presented, all the following direct quotations will be taken from King's speech in April, 1964.

task is to speak for those who have been designated as our enemies." In a context in which the political discourse tradition was always to speak of the United States as the land of the free, or the "firefighters" of the world, proposing an alternative and opposite view is revolutionary. "How can they believe in our integrity when now we speak of "aggression from the North" as if there were nothing more essential to the war?", he asks. The speech is covered with repetitions such as "We must speak..", which convey the urgency of the matter to the listener. The aim of the speech in fact was not a merely communicative one, it was a call to action to his peers.

In fact, as the aim of the first part of the speech was "to give a voice to the voiceless in Vietnam and to understand the arguments of those who are called "enemy"", the second part of the speech focuses on what the government should actually do to remove itself from Vietnam. He called for the end of all bombings, a unilateral ceasefire, negotiations to reach an agreement, and the removal of US military from the territory. "Let us not join those who shout war and, through their misguided passions, urge the United States to relinquish its participation in the United Nations", he asks. It is a call to action not only towards American official and leaders, but also towards the American people.

The persuasive and strong character of King's speech is comparable to that of American presidents, although the aim and structure is entirely different. Whereas US leaders aimed at persuading the public to think that the war in Vietnam was an unavoidable "war for freedom", he invites them to form their own opinion not in the name of patriotism, but in the name of facts. The facts he presents are indeed thoroughly evaluated, and he achieves that by considering the brutal effects of war from a psychological, economic, social, political and cultural point of view. It is an example of speech that is far less abstract and ideological than the usual ones: he focuses on facts, and hopes that facts will show the hypocrisy of America.

The centre of the speech is in fact demonstrating that war was never the answer, and it never will be. War is a barbaric tradition that harms both parties, and only creates destruction. If the United States wanted to participate in a revolution, then that would have to be a "positive revolution of values". What Martin Luther King Jr. is doing is proposing an alternative to the preponderant common discourse on war by American leaders. What is more, it is clear that war is usually a confusing subject for the constituency, which is why clarity in his speech is at the forefront. What he is trying to achieve is the proposition of an alternative to war based on facts.

From a linguistic point of view, the strategies used are numerous. He uses a great deal of religious and philosophical references, as well as figurative speech. Metaphors are used to enhance the brutality of war and its consequences on "us", the common black and white people that are sent abroad to witness barbarianism at its worst. However, "us" this time also comprehends the Vietnamese people, who are forced to witness bombings and destruction of their homeland in name of a war that is anything but freeing. It is the first time that the perspective of the oppressed are taken into consideration in a public political speech about the Vietnam War. Paradoxically, war is the most democratic tool, in the sense that it hits all parties involved in the same capacity. As he states, in fact, "War is not the answer."

More precisely, his speech is filled with ethos, pathos, and logos (StudyCorgi, 2022). Ethos concerns the legitimacy of his character in speaking about the Vietnam War, which he outlines at the beginning. He is in fact a powerful exponent of the civil rights movement, so it would be only fair that war does not fall under his moral vision. Ethos is a way to communicate to listeners that he is worth being listened to. Pathos can be found throughout the entirety of the speech, and concerns evoking emotions in listeners. With the description and proposition of the true images of war, which are destruction, killings, brutality, and violence, King aims at persuading listeners to feel the effects of war, instead of merely receiving them as information. Lastly, logos is the use of actual data and factual evidence to back his stance on the Vietnam War. Although the language used may at times be metaphorical and strategic, each of his assertions is backed by evidence and statistics. He uses indeed past historical instances to explain the current situation at the time.

Finally, it is necessary to remember that since the nature of the speech was not the usual one, it was not well-received. Large publications such as the New York Times highly criticised it as being too simplistic and confusing. The critique was also based on the fact that Martin Luther King Jr. was an exponent of the civil rights movement, and linking it with the Vietnam War was a hazard, which is why he received backlash also by associations that would normally support him, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (Darby & Rowley, 1986). Nevertheless, King would still proceed to maintain and express his strong beliefs about the Vietnam War until he was assassinated in 1968. Although it is difficult to analyse whether his speech had a clear influence on the outcomes of the

Vietnam War in the following years, it is safe to say that is was an alternative to the usual narrative that shook the public.

In 1969 it was Nixon that took office as the 37th President of the United States. Martin Luther King Jr. famously stated in his speech that "A time comes when silence is betrayal. And that time has come for us in relation to Vietnam." It is interesting to compare this statement to how instead Nixon decided to speak about the Vietnam War in November 1969. Whereas King called for everyone to break their silence, Nixon addressed the "silent majority" of people in support of the Vietnam War.

3.4.5. "The Great Silent Majority": President Nixon's Speech about the Vietnam War in 1969

After the Tet Offensive of 1968, in which North Vietnam vigorously attacked South Vietnam (backed by the United States), the magnitude of the conflict was still strong, and tensions ever-growing. In 1969 Nixon took office and succeeded Johnson, who decided it would not be worth it to run for a second mandate. Nixon focused on the situation in Vietnam by restoring the peace talks that began with Johnson's presidency. These were conducted in secret, and although they witnessed several halts, they led to an agreement in 1973. Nevertheless, from a political point of view, during his presidency Nixon proposed a set of policies that would help the United States to end involvement in the Vietnam War without losing face or honour in the eyes of global public opinion, that is, "Vietnamization" (Gholz, 2009).

Vietnamization or the Nixon Doctrine was presented during the first year of his presidency in 1969 during a televised speech addressing the nation on the Vietnam War. The Vietnam War was highly unpopular among the constituency, who had witnessed its atrocities and brutalities for a long time at that point. In addition, the anti-war movement was stirring, and although there have been discussions on its actual impact on foreign policies, it is safe to assert that it was hard to ignore. In fact, Nixon addressed the nation about it on November 3, 1969. This speech by President Nixon is considered to be a pivotal one as it reinforced once again the necessity of the Vietnam War from an ideological point of view. From the point of view of its contents, in fact, it differs completely from the speech given by Martin Luther King Jr. in opposition to

the war, in which he included the Vietnamese perspective in a massive way. Here, Nixon is back to evaluating what the Vietnam War means to the American people.

At the beginning of the speech, he acknowledges that there are movements that push for the ending of US involvement in the Vietnam War. However, as he states, "Let us all understand that the question before us is not whether some Americans are for peace and some Americans are against peace. [...] The great question is: How can we win America's peace?" (Nixon, 1969)[7] According to him, the aim of the United States is that of gaining America's peace without losing honour or legitimacy, which is why it had taken so long until that point. He proceeds by explaining the reasons why the United States became involved in the conflict in the first place, which are presented in the usual rhetoric about the Vietnam War that his predecessors had used.

He states that "Fifteen years ago North Vietnam, with the logistical support of Communist China and the Soviet Union, launched a campaign to impose a Communist government on South Vietnam by instigating and supporting a revolution." Once again, presenting a rather personal historical account of what happened at the beginning of the conflict to the American people listening gives legitimacy to what his proposals would be later in the speech. In fact, an immediate withdrawal of US forces in the territory "would spark violence wherever our commitments help maintain the peace-in the Middle East, in Berlin, eventually even in the Western Hemisphere." Ending the war in a rushed way would further the mission of the Soviet Union to conquer the world, which is the way the Vietnam War was always linguistically framed by US leaders.

In addition, as he recalls, there have been a set of proposals for peace that were initiated by the United States, and the government of North Vietnam disregarded. These include secret negotiations, which he acknowledges for the first time, letters, proposals to engage in public negotiations, new elections, all of which had failed. However, according to him they did not fail because of natural disagreements in these types of negotiations, but they failed because of the other party's total unwillingness to cooperate. "It has become clear that the obstacle in negotiating an end to the war is not the President of the United States. It is not the South Vietnamese Government.

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[7] For the purpose of the analysis here presented, all the following direct quotations will be taken from Nixon's speech in November, 1969.

The obstacle is the other side's absolute refusal to show the least willingness to join us in seeking a just peace." Again, the full responsibility for the failure of reaching an agreement is blamed on the stubbornness of the North Vietnamese government, which is not open to talks and wants to continue the conflict. The United States government, on the other side, is the only one engaging in finding a way to solve the conflict, which is a strong persuasive argument to make.

Since none of Nixon's attempts had worked according to him, he proposed an alternative which he called the "Nixon Doctrine", again strategically showing that his name and his authority should be associated with the final solution to the conflict. "We Americans are a do-it-yourself people. We are an impatient people. Instead of teaching someone else to do a job, we like to do it ourselves. And this trait has been carried over into our foreign policy." Contrary to the Vietnamese people, who are stubborn and not open to negotiating, "we" (the inclusive we) Americans are so resourceful that we can solve the conflict ourselves. This is why he proposed the Nixon Doctrine that is organised according to three main points:

– First, the United States will keep all of its treaty commitments.
– Second, we shall provide a shield if a nuclear power threatens the freedom of a nation allied with us or of a nation whose survival we consider vital to our security.
– Third, in cases involving other types of aggression, we shall furnish military and economic assistance when requested in accordance with our treaty commitments. But we shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defence.

The Nixon Doctrine revolves indeed around these three (which is not a random number, but strategically conveys "completeness") concepts. The framing of the conflict is yet again described through words such as "aggression", or "threat", which adds a sentiment of urgency and necessity to act in order to protect "our freedom" and the freedom of nations that are allied to the United States. Certainly, the Nixon Doctrine would mean the beginning of the end of the conflict, as the negotiations that would continue to be conducted would eventually lead in 1973 to the achievement of an agreement. However, it is still fascinating to notice in what terms the United States decided to appear to the negotiating table. One could in fact argue that anyone would be discouraged to negotiate freely and in a friendly way with a country that perpetuates an

idea of its values that is factually inexact, and that directly impacts those of the other party.

Considering Critical Discourse Analysis and the power of strategic language, this speech by Nixon may be the best example of this yet. From a structural point of view, the speech is meticulously organised into a number of parts that concern different aspects of the Vietnam War and US involvement, which help the listener to track the message and follow a progression of facts that are presented in a logical and coherent way. Logic and rationality are in fact at the centre of his speech. He presents the listeners with a crude truth that is hard to confute, which is that war is indeed a strategic endeavour. What this means is that under this light, anti-war movements that call for an immediate end of the war become useless and superficial, since ending a war means mitigating losses both in a moral and material way. This is why he addresses the "silent majority", those who have understood that suddenly withdrawing troops would mean to admit that the war was lost by the United States.

This stands as a coherent and convincing argument. "But I want to end it in a way which will increase the chance that their younger brothers and their sons will not have to fight in some future Vietnam someplace in the world." According to him and implicitly, what the anti-war movements and people that oppose the war do not understand, is that ending the war is the aim of everyone. However, it must be ended in a way that does not harm the reputation of the United States. The *topos* of the American lives lost for freedom, and for the well-being of future families is of course still highly present in the speech. The centre of his speech is recognising that sacrifices had been made by Americans until that point, and they would be vain if the war was ended so abruptly. What is more, he adds a personal and individual perspective on the topic, which again is used to resonate with the audience, and show that he also suffers this situation. As he stated, "This week I will have to sign 83 letters to mothers, fathers, wives, and loved ones of men who have given their lives for America in Vietnam. […] There is nothing I want more than to see the day come when I do not have to write any of those letters."

The style used by Nixon is formal at times, as it is adapted to the context of the speech, which is a formal address to the nation concerning an important issue. In other instances, it is however highly simplistic. He uses rhetorical devices such as metaphors and repetitions to persuade the listeners that the message he is conveying is the right way to face this issue. Through the use of familiar words, common metaphors,

a clear and logical structure, and persuasive language, Nixon aims at appealing not to the actual majority of people pushing for the ending of the conflict, but to the "silent" majority that wants to "protect" the "land of the free".

Negotiations between the United States, South Vietnam and North Vietnam would continue until the Paris Peace Agreements were reached in 1973. Nixon would address the nation again in 1973 when the conflict formally came to an end, and it may be interesting to compare how Nixon's rhetoric changed between the beginning of his presidency in 1969, and 1973 when the conflict ended.

3.4.6. The End of the Conflict: Nixon's Address to the Nation Announcing Conclusion of an Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam

The "Nixon Doctrine" as presented by Nixon himself during his speech in 1969 was to be considered as an innovative foreign policy strategy that revolved around a set of principles. In defending its allies against communist aggression, the United States would gradually reduce its involvement and presence in Vietnam territory, but still support South Vietnam with economic and military aid. This would result in the United States winning the war, and reaching a peace agreement that would not harm the honour of the land of the free. It was in fact strategically presented by Nixon as the only way possible to end the war, and thus respond to the growing domestic pressures that the United States was facing. However, despite the persuasive and convincing language used in his speech in 1969, the Nixon Doctrine would hardly be applied according to the principles outlined by Nixon (Kimball, 2006).

To Nixon and his advisors, in fact, winning the war with honour meant negotiating a peace agreement that would reflect their initial interests, which were keeping the same government that was in power in South Vietnam as to prevent the formation of a communist state. To achieve that, the principles explained in the Nixon Doctrine were not considered that much, as the escalation of the conflict kept growing in the midst of negotiations. In fact, National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger was continuing secret negotiations with North Vietnam's representative Le Duc Tho, and an agreement was reached in October 1972. However, the new terms did not appeal to South Vietnam's leader Thieu, who stalled the negotiations once again as he felt betrayed by the United States (Katz, 1997). The new propositions of South Vietnam to be added to a new agreement became public, and in seeing them, North Vietnam's

leaders also felt betrayed by Kissinger, which led to a total stall in the negotiation process.

The only way possible was thus organising an operation of bombings that would push North Vietnam to return to the negotiating table, which is what happened in December 1972 in what would be referred to as the "Christmas Bombings" (Ambrose, 2017). It needs to be highlighted that domestic pressure was at full force at that time, which is why Nixon was pushing for the achievement of an agreement by January 1973. In fact, the nation was undergoing new elections and thus a new congress, which could certainly hinder Nixon's efforts in the Vietnam War by stopping fundings. What is more, the anti-war sentiments were stronger than ever. Nevertheless, Nixon decided to proceed with the Christmas Bombings in December, which caused a great number of civilian and military casualties, a strong retaliation by North Vietnam, and critiques both domestically and internationally. Finally, negotiations resumed at the beginning of January 1973, and the agreement discussed remained the same as before. After intimidations by Nixon to South Vietnam's leader Thieu to accept the agreement, all parties eventually agreed to sign it, and a formal agreement was indeed signed on January 27, 1973.

This is the historical context in which Nixon spoke publicly announcing the achievement of an agreement that would end the Vietnam war on January 23, 1973. Other than political and diplomatic difficulties in reaching that point, public opinion about the agreement was also important to the presidency, which is why he directly addressed the nation. With respects to previous speeches, this speech presents itself as more of an announcement, which is why it is shorter. The aim was that of conveying the message that the United States had basically won the long war in a clear and concise way. At the beginning of the speech, in fact, referring to his aim of reaching "peace with honour", he states that "In the settlement that has now been agreed to, allthe conditions that I laid down then have been met" (Nixon, 1973)[8]. In actuality, concessions by both parties were made, yet stating that what had been promised was respected is far more convenient from a political point of view.

The most interesting part of the speech is the section in which he decides to address all parties that have contributed to the conflict over the years, as it is full of strategic and political language. Recognising and even thanking the former "enemy"

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[8] For the purpose of the analysis here presented, all the following direct quotations will be taken from Nixon's speech in January, 1973.

is in fact one of the main rules of political diplomacy. In political debates, every speech begins by recognising the arguments proposed by the adversary and thanking them, which is both a sign of respect and a demonstration to the audience that the positions of the adversary may be legitimate, but can be confuted.

Addressing South Vietnam, he states that "By your courage, by your sacrifice, you have won the precious right to determine your own future, and you have developed the strength to defend that right." This is a recurrent argument at the end of conflicts or long litigations that have led to a great number of casualties, and great material damage. It is the *topos* of all sacrifices in terms of lives lost and material damage not being vain, as they led to this moment, which is basically the achievement of freedom. What is more, the development of the strength to defend their freedom is here presented as a self-made effort, which sounds illogical, given the enormous military and financial aid provided by the United States over those years. It is however politically and diplomatically appealing to the audience. According to the linguistic framing of this discourse, in fact, all American and Vietnamese lives lost become part of a greater scheme, which is the achievement of freedom, and thus meaningful. Addressing North Vietnam, he states that "As we have ended the war through negotiations, let us now build a peace of reconciliation", despite knowing that reconciliation would not be possible with a communist state, or a state that was even remotely under the influence of the Soviet Union.

More importantly, addressing the American people he justifies the negotiations conducted in secret. As explained in section 2.1.6 concerning Track Two Diplomacy, in fact, one of the main disadvantages of secret negotiations is presenting them to the public once an agreement is reached. Anything that is conducted in secret can indeed create a sense of mistrust between the constituency and leaders, which is why it is important to convey the message in a considerate way. He states:

> And finally, to all of you who are listening, the American people: Your steadfastness in supporting our insistence on peace with honour has made peace with honour possible. I know that you would not have wanted that peace jeopardized. With our secret negotiations at the sensitive stage they were in during this recent period, for me to have discussed publicly our efforts to secure peace would not only have violated our understanding with North Vietnam, it would have seriously harmed and

possibly destroyed the chances for peace. [...] The important thing was not to talk about peace, but to get peace--and to get the right kind of peace. This we have done.

Secrecy is justified by the fact that an agreement was reached, and according to him it was the agreement that he wanted from the beginning, and the agreement that also the American people desired. As in his silent majority speech, here he thanks those who have steadily supported his efforts in achieving peace with honour, which as demonstrated, were the minority. The majority of public opinion was fuelled by strong anti-war movements due to a long and atrocious conflict that was at that point unbearable. Nevertheless, he still proceeds by thanking "the wives, the children, the families of our prisoners of war and the missing in action". The *topos* of family has been recurrent throughout the analysis of most of the speeches here presented, because it is the easiest way to strike a chord with the audience, and especially with those who are listening who have lost relatives in the conflict. In fact, he states that "When others called on us to settle on any terms, you had the courage to stand for the right kind of peace so that those who died and those who suffered would not have died and suffered in vain, and so that where this generation knew war, the next generation would know peace."

In addition, what happened following the signing of the agreement shows that living in a world of peace thanks to the efforts of the American people was far from reality. From 1973 to 1975 direct conflict continued between South and North Vietnam, and also US involvement was not totally eliminated. The option to increase once again military aid to South Vietnam was only stopped by an amendment by US Congress that prohibited further military efforts in the territory, and by the Watergate scandal in 1974, which is what led Nixon to resign later that year. In 1975, Saigon (South Vietnam) fell to the North Vietnamese army, Thieu resigned, and the unified Socialist Republic of Vietnam was created (Burn & Ward, 2017).

The analysis of strategic use of political language shows how much framing the conflict through linguistic and rhetorical devices can influence the course of events, and shift public opinion, which is what Critical Discourse Analysis focuses on. Finally, all elements evaluated and analysed both from a political and linguistic point of view merge to create what is commonly referred to as collective memory. As a final contribution to the analysis, it may be interesting to analyse how the Vietnam War was engraved in collective memory, and how it is referred to in more current political times.

3.5 Remembering the Vietnam War: Collective Memory and Current Interpretation

The Vietnam War was one of the most divisive conflicts in the history of the United States. As regards impact, it has led to an enormous number of casualties both in terms of American and Vietnamese lives. What is more, it has undoubtedly harmed the reputation of the United States as the most powerful state in the world at that time, so much that it is still highly referenced by political leaders in current times. Concerning the relationship between language and politics, it was one of the greatest examples of how two elements that govern our lives interact in a dialectical and essential way. It was demonstrated that framing a conflict in a political context when it is happening is as important as deciding how to face it. More specifically, it is especially the framing of the conflict through language that leads to practical decisions concerning how to act, and vice versa. Language and diplomacy are two sides of the same coin, and they thrive in public political discourse.

One final aspect that is strictly linked to language concerns collective memory, meaning in what terms the memory of the conflict will linger in the public's minds, by public meaning both common people and political leaders. Since the parties that participated in the conflict were many, this entails that the conflict will be remembered in different ways according to the party considered. In fact, North Vietnamese people may present a diverse account from American people on the war, as the conditions they experienced during the conflict highly differed. What is more, ideology and disparate perspectives on history contribute to shaping collective memory, and they differ depending on the point of view taken.

After a thorough analysis on the political discourse around the Vietnam War, it is safe to state that on the American side, "The liberal interpretation initially saw US involvement in Vietnam as the result of good anti-communist intentions goneawry" (Hopkins, 2000: 101). The perspective was in fact that of a strong belief that there existed a kind of conspiracy to conquer the world by the Soviet Union that wouldresult in communism spreading rapidly all over the world, and thus undermining the so-called "freedom" supported by the United States. This is why American leaders decided to intervene in foreign matters in a huge number of occasions throughout history. However, this was the initial misconception that led to the United States intervening in the conflict. On the contrary, North Vietnam saw the Vietnam War as a

continuation of their political struggle to achieve independency, with the United States being yet another colonial power that wanted to interfere with the natural progression of that process, and South Vietnam being subjected to its influence.

Although there have been an enormous number of studies about what could have happened if the conflict was handled differently, the point of collective memory is to analyse how America's failure lingers in today's society. An event of such magnitude leads in fact to what is commonly known as cultural trauma, which is defined as follows:

> A cultural trauma is a discursive response to a tear in the social fabric, occurring when the foundations of established collective identity are shaken by one or a series of seemingly interrelated occurrences. The resulting discursive process can be understood as a meaning struggle, where individual and collective actors attempt to define a situation and impose a particular meaning onto it (Eyerman et al, 2017: 11).

What this means for the United States is that it has endangered the collective idea of it being a country that was fighting for freedom and could never fail in such a task, as it was helping the world. After the Vietnam War, this collective identity became questionable if not completely disrupted, especially in a time in the 1960s in which global social movements were questioning a great number of values that were fixed until that point.

It was a time for change in what were considered American values, and direct witnesses of the war were crucial in the process. Under this approach individuality becomes indeed fundamental as it contributes to collective identity. Listening to the voice of those who lived through the Vietnam War (which in common historical language would be referred to as primary sources) and that have told their story through books, movies, then perpetuated through social media becomes fundamental. In this process, however, it is important to state that the same strategic language that was used during the conflict may be used intentionally or unintentionally to perpetuate the usual ideologies even years after the conflict has ended. Collective memory is in fact totally different from history. It is about selection, perspectives, and completely governed by a natural lack of objectivity.

In fact, the literature on collective memory could be summarized in a series of principles that frame it in its formation process and meaning (McMahon, 2002).

First, history and memories do not pertain to the same realm. The process of memory formation shows that memories rarely emerge from historical accounts, but rather are constructed and selected based on what needs to be remembered, and what needs to be forgotten. Then, this process is often highly influenced by the present, meaning that memories are constructed based on the needs of the present situation. In practical terms, this would mean for instance that in 2022 when there is no Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, remembering the Vietnam War as "Soviet expansion" would not serve any purpose. In addition, a crucial point concerns the élites or political leaders, which play a key role in shaping collective memory, given their high political prestige and power. Finally, it is safe to state that collective memory is strictly linked with collective identity, meaning it changes based on the social group considered (in this case the United States, North Vietnam, South Vietnam, and so forth).

Concerning American collective memory, it is safe to say that the Vietnam War is now seen as an avoidable mistake, yet it took years and years of revision to reach this point (Dumbrell, 2012). For instance, in the immediate years after the Vietnam War, political leaders such as Reagan and George H. W. Bush referred to the "Vietnam syndrome", which is basically the fear by political leaders (caused by North Vietnam) to engage in foreign conflicts or affairs due to probability of losing credibility or approval (Kalb, 2013). This concept has haunted American policy for a long time, and according to leaders has hindered them in the task of pursuing foreign policy in a confident and aggressive way. Once again, the strategic use of language in public political discourse shows how framing certain aspects of a conflict even after it is over can influence our perception of it. "Syndrome" is indeed a clear reminder of one of the *topos* of public political discourse, which is that of metaphorically aligning behaviours to illnesses. The Soviet Union was often associated with a disease that needed to be eradicated before it spread all over the world, and the same rhetoric remained even after.

To understand how collective memory differs based on place, ideologies, individuality or culture considered, it is interesting to notice how it is instead remembered in North Vietnam, which would be considered a winner of the conflict. It is remembered as the "American War", and during those years it was presented as a struggle for independence (Rosen, 2015). In this case collective memory cannot neglect the fact that Vietnam is a territory that has endured decades of disputes over

territory and governments. The American War was indeed seen as a continuation of the conflict against the colonial rule of the French, and then of the United States. The United States weaponised the conflict in Vietnam as a way to pursue their interests in the Cold War and the containment strategy against the Soviet Union. In fact, many in Vietnam saw it as more of a civil conflict between North and South Vietnam than an international one. Once again, collective memory is never static and never objective, but it changes according to whose story is being considered. This is then perpetuated over time with a set of memorial instruments that go from national memorials and museums, national holidays remembering the conflict, media coverage (from movies to literature) about the conflict, public political speeches, and so forth.

Concerning political speeches, which are the focus of this dissertation, whereas Reagan and George H. W. Bush spoke about the Vietnam syndrome, the narrative changed with Bill Clinton and the following presidents. Bill Clinton was notorious for participating in anti-war movements when he was younger and thus opposing the war. When he became president in 1993, 20 years after the signing of the Paris Peace Accords, he spoke at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on Memorial Day and stated "Let us continue to disagree if we must about the war, but let us not let it divide us as a people any longer" (Clinton, 1993). As he continued:

Let us resolve to take from this haunting and beautiful memorial a renewed sense of our national unity and purpose, a deepened gratitude for the sacrifice of those whose names we touched and whose memories we revere and a finer dedication to making America a better place for their children and for our children, too.

The *topos* of the Vietnam War being a much-needed sacrifice to make America a better place was thus still present in American public political discourse. As the further involvement of the United States in foreign affairs showed, such as the Gulf War under President George H. W. Bush, a cure to the "Vietnam syndrome" was found, and the United States could return to the rhetoric of a victorious country fighting for freedom, for "our" children, and for those who "sacrifice" their lives for "our" future. The underlying linguistic implication of that, of course, is that the Vietnam War was a noble war that went wrong, yet it should not define the values of the United States which are still alive and well. Admitting instead that it was an aggression on a

foreign state for the pursuit of national interests would be a political and rhetorical loss for the United States and the values it professedly stands for.

George W. Bush, who was president from 2001 to 2009, is the one who undertook the so-called "global war on terror" after the 9/11 attack in 2001, which would require a special and extensive linguistic analysis in itself. It would result in several American operations such as the invasion of Afghanistan, the invasion of Iraq, and so forth (Schmitt, 2005). In a speech in 2007 at the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Convention discussing the War on Terror, Bush repeatedly referenced the Vietnam War. As he stated:

> There was another price to our withdrawal from Vietnam, and we can hear it in the words of the enemy we face in today's struggle -- those who came to our soil and killed thousands of citizens on September the 11th, 2001. In an interview with a Pakistani newspaper after the 9/11 attacks, Osama bin Laden declared that "the American people had risen against their government's war in Vietnam. And they must do the same today." […] Unlike in Vietnam, if we withdraw before the job is done, this enemy will follow us home (Bush, 2007).

So, the Vietnam War was still used as a comparison, yet it seemed like the lessons that should have been learned during that conflict were instead used to justifyonce again American involvement in foreign countries. The withdrawal of forces fromVietnam was now considered a mistake in the political collective memory about the Vietnam War, and was used to propose what should have been done in the following conflicts.

If we shift towards more contemporary presidents, then Obama is the first example of a president from a generation that did not witness directly how the Vietnam War was handled. Still, as he stated in his speech in 2012 on Memorial Day at the Vietnam War Memorial, "For we know that while your sacrifice and service is the very definition of glory, war itself is not glorious. We hate war. When we fight, we doso to protect ourselves because it's necessary" (Obama, 2012). Nevertheless, it may besafe to state that the Vietnam War was never a war to "protect ourselves", but a war of national interest. We could proceed to analyse Trump's rhetoric on the Vietnam War, or the newly elected President Biden's discourse about the Vietnam War, yet the result would be the same. The Vietnam War is engraved in our collective memories as a

sacrifice that was necessary to guarantee that the United States achieved their freedom, whatever that meant at the time, and means today.

To conclude, it has by now become clear how language infiltrates the deepest parts of society and politics, and how it can influence both the course of events and our future recollection of them. What this analysis should demonstrate is that language is a powerful tool that is the basis of diplomacy, and as such it can never be neglected, especially in its underlying and hidden meanings, as Critical Discourse Analysis asserts. In all fields words hold meaning, meaning holds power, and power leads to action, which is why current battles for a more inclusive language, for instance, are not superficial but instead strictly necessary. The dialectical relationship between language and political discourse has demonstrated that what the United States may see as "necessary", others may see as "useless". What the United States may see as "sacrifice", others may see as "slaughter". And finally, what the United States may see as "freedom", others may see as an "oppressive perpetuation of imperialism".

Conclusions

This dissertation has dealt with the dialectical relationship between language and politics, and how it can become a strategic tool to assert ideological biases and communicate them to the public.

Starting from this assumption, an overview was presented on an innovative approach to the analysis of discourse production, namely, Critical Discourse Analysis. The discipline was intended as a multidisciplinary approach to discourse analysis that would take into consideration systemic power and power inequalities as they become manifest through language. More precisely, through the work of the main experts on this approach such as Wodak, Fairclough, and van Dijk, different takes were evaluated on the elements that need to be considered in order for the analysis to be effective. These are commonly known as the Socio-cultural Approach by Fairclough, the Discourse-historical Approach by Wodak, and the Socio-cognitive Approach by van Dijk. What these provide is a merging of elements pertaining to societal norms, historical context, and individual socio-cognitive dimension that contribute to a production of discourse that is rarely unbiased and deprived of ideology.

In fact, when critically analysing any discourse through these elements throughout this dissertation, it has become clear that language plays an active role in how reality and perception of reality are shaped, thus leading to material consequences in behaviour by political leaders. For instance, framing the "Cold War" as such, or the "Vietnam War" as such instantly creates an ideological bias on how to perceive the event. Cold war may in fact refer to a war that never escalated to a direct conflict, or to a period in time where there was no dialogue between the two superpowers of the world (United States and Soviet Union), which are all statements that were demonstrated in this dissertation not to be factually true.

Framing becomes thus fundamental in order to understand historical events pertaining to international relations, and to then engrave them in our collective memories. After a theoretical introduction on CDA, which concerns the most linguistic part of the dissertation, fundamental concepts were presented pertaining to international relations and political theory. Among these the most important was diplomacy, which was analysed under a number of aspects. Firstly, how the discipline of diplomacy evolved, which is directly linked with how international relations are

conducted through negotiations. In fact, international negotiations are the main expression of diplomatic efforts between states or third parties, and they have proven to be fundamental in a number of instances throughout history, especially when conducted in secrecy in what is commonly referred to as backchannel negotiations or Track Two Diplomacy. Then, a reflection was presented upon the elements that can influence diplomacy and international negotiations, such as public opinion and other external pressures, which were crucial elements in the Vietnam War and the negotiations that led to its end agreement.

When linguistic theory and political theory are combined, it becomes possible to outline a set of usual rhetorical strategies that are commonly used in political discourse. These are an evident expression of ideological biases that may or may not be intentional, but nonetheless are often present, especially in public speeches. Among the most important Othering, the Us versus Them dichotomy, and the East-West contraposition were analysed, as they can be found in almost every political speech. Most of the time, this happens independently from the political partyone belongs to. In fact, although it may be true that in the United States conservative versus liberal approaches to political discourse may differ, the strategies used are stillthe same. The matter becomes what strategy one leader chooses to commonly give more weight to, which then allows us to organise a clear overview on the usual type of strategic discourse of the party the individual belongs to, such as populism, for instance.

The third part of the dissertation has indeed focused extensively on the critical analysis of select speeches from American political leaders during the Vietnam War, which was a pivotal moment in the history of the United States. The progression of the events in the Vietnam War and the Paris Peace Negotiations were presented chronologically firstly through a brief historical account, and then through the eyes of the four US presidents that governed during the conflict. What became evident was a clear attempt by American leaders to frame the war as a necessary endeavour to guarantee that freedom to self-determinate was respected in Vietnam. On the contrary, however, how North Vietnam framed the conflict was instead as a clear imperialist attempt by the United States to exert its power over Vietnamese territory, which sounds highly different than implementing freedom.

The containment strategy, intended to avoid the expansion of communism and pushed even explicitly by American leaders and policy makers, demonstrates that

as per definition, states pursue a national interest: they are usually conceived as monolithic units, and thus not diversified. We are led to believe that state is the expression of a national interest which is given, so that state equals the desire of the population. However, there are conflicts even within states, which is why national interest also becomes quite subjective, so that a discrepancy appears between implementing freedom, and avoiding communist expansion. It is the same reason why during the 1960s students started to organise in social movements such as the anti-war movement advocating for the end of a useless and unbearable conflict, which again sounds highly different than implementing freedom.

However, the political discourse around the Vietnam War by political leaders still remained firm in its pledge to freedom and global security. Kennedy spoke of the United States as "firefighters of the world", while Nixon in the midst of a rampant anti-war movement tried to appeal to the "great silent majority" that supported the war. These are all strategies to conceal the real issue with American foreign policy, which is that freedom eventually became an undefinable concept. What the Vietnam War did probably for the first time was indeed shatter the idea that the United States was an infallible country concerned with the freedom of the world. Despite the public attempts to describe the war as an endeavor to defend the right of Vietnam to self-determination, the horror and devastation that it brought eventually became evident to the public. In addition, it became clear that the national interest that should be the expression of the constituency was being disregarded.

The final reflection on how the Vietnam War was engraved in our collective memory thoroughly explains why this is a relevant topic at the international level. The way we choose to remember historical events, especially if devastating and of such magnitude, is fundamental to ensure that they are adequately framed, and they do not happen again in the same capacity. For instance, finally recognising that the United States was a country built on slavery is not a dangerous task, as it does not hinder the values on which it was built. It does, however, give context and new meanings to them. Subsequently, recognising when political discourse is produced strategically and with specific aims becomes crucial to actually become free and independent citizens.

The dissertation started with the clear assertion that language is the way we decrypt reality. It is the way we give meaning to events, and as such it gains profound importance, especially in international relations, where communication is key. The logical result is that words hold weight, and should not be strategically abused with

the aim of pursuing a national interest that seldom represents that of the majority of the population. As scholars and experts have started to attempt in recent history, the main necessary task becomes to identify these strategies, and deconstruct biases in diplomacy, and in political discourse in general.

Finally, the recent history of the United States has shown that not much was learned by the Vietnam War, as the same rhetoric on freedom was still extensively used in the recent endeavours in the invasion of Iraq of 2003, for instance. Freedom is a word that holds enormous weight and may mean different things for different people. To a colonised country, it might mean finally gaining independence. To a black individual, it may mean finally being stripped of the stereotypes that have progressively and systemically been associated with blackness. To a gay individual, it may mean being able to finally be who they are regardless of societal norms. To the eyes of the United States, however, it was never clear what freedom meant, and who was truly deserving of that right.

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