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Knowledge, discourse and domination

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Within the framework of an interdisciplinary project on discourse and knowledge, this paper explores the more critical, sociopolitical aspects of the relationship between these two fundamental notions in the humanities and social sciences, relating them with another fundamental notion, namely that of power. More specifically, I focus on power abuse – or domination – as a major dimension of social inequality. After a summary of the main properties of knowledge as I define it – namely as justified, shared beliefs of an epistemic community – I first examine the fundamental role of knowledge in discourse production and comprehension, for instance in the construction of mental (situation) models that are the basis of discourse meaning as attributed by the participants. It is argued that in addition to the standard cognitive theory of discourse processing, we also need a pragmatic component defining contexts as mental context models subjectively representing the relevant parameters of the communicative situation, and defining the appropriateness of discourse. One of the fundamental appropriateness conditions is that speakers adapt their discourse to the (assumed) knowledge of the recipients. It is at this point that the paper focuses on the possible domination as power abuse when powerful persons or institutions manage knowledge or information to recipients in their own interests. The paper examines various levels and structures of discourse as possible means to manipulate knowledge in communication and interaction, finally illustrated with an analysis of the usage of knowledge by former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair in his well-known Iraq speech in the House of Commons on March 13, 2003.

1. Introduction

In this paper I examine some aspects of the reproduction of knowledge in discourse and how such a study may be relevant within the framework of Critical Discourse Studies. Such an exploration continues a rich tradition of studies, of which Michel Foucault obviously has been a major exponent within philosophy (see, e.g., Foucault 1972). My approach, however, will be more multidisciplinary,

inspired by both the cognitive and the social sciences. I more concretely focus on the cognitive and discursive strategies of the reproduction of knowledge, and how such strategies in turn contribute to the reproduction of power abuse, that is, to manipulation and social domination.

In my earlier work on racism, ideology and context, I examine this question within the triangulated framework of the integrated study of discourse, cognition and society (see, e.g., Van Dijk 1993, 1998, 2008a, 2009). As I have done before, I shall use data from a decisive debate in 2003 in the UK House of Commons on Iraq, in which Tony Blair defends his decision to send troops to Iraq. This debate is still relevant today, in 2010, given the current investigations into the legality of the British participation in the invasion of Iraq.

2. Knowledge

The notion of knowledge, as is the case for all fundamental notions of the humanities and social sciences, has been studied from many perspectives, and since Antiquity (among a vast number of introductions, handbooks and readers in various areas, see, e.g., Bernecker and Dretzke 2000; Goldman 1986, 1999; Markman 1999; Stehr and Meja 1984; Wilkes 1997). I shall therefore limit my account to a brief summary of some of its major characteristics as elaborated in the contemporary cognitive and social sciences, and especially from the perspective of the (critical) study of discourse (Wodak and Meyer 2008; Van Dijk 2008b). Since even such a more limited scope can still fill many books, I only highlight some major relevant characteristics in a short list, e.g., to mark some differences with contemporary epistemology. My major focus will be on social, rather than on personal knowledge, and on declarative or propositional knowledge ('knowledge that') rather than on procedural knowledge or abilities ('knowledge how to'). Here are some of the main characteristics of knowledge in my own theoretical framework (see also my previous studies of knowledge and discourse: Van Dijk 2003a, 2003b, 2005, 2006).

1. *Beliefs*. Knowledge consists of beliefs that are certified (justified, validated, etc.) by the (knowledge) criteria of a (knowledge) community.
2. *Criteria*. Knowledge criteria or standards may vary among communities, and typically involve such conditions as reliable observations (perceptions), sources and inference, whether in their daily commonsense forms or in their more scientific or other professional or cultural forms.
3. *Institutionalization*. Knowledge criteria may be developed and controlled by authorities or institutions and their discourses, such as academies, schools,

laboratories, universities, and their teachers, textbooks, dictionaries, encyclopedias and scholarly publications. The association of knowledge and power is generally based on this institutional aspect of knowledge, but reproduced in everyday life by all members of society and its groups, institutions and organizations.

4. *Socially shared.* More specifically, (social) knowledge consists of those (certified, etc.) beliefs that are shared and hence tacitly taken for granted by (almost) all competent members of an epistemic community.
5. *Relativism.* In this sense knowledge is relative (to a community, and its criteria): what is knowledge for one community may be just mere belief or prejudice or totally ignored by another. Hence also such relativity is itself relative, as it should be: For the members of the community itself, knowledge will usually be seen as 'true belief' (as the classical definition in epistemology defines it), and not to be relative at all.
6. *Presupposition.* Social knowledge is presupposed in the social practices and hence in the public discourses among the members of the same epistemic community.
7. *Types of knowledge.* There are many ways to classify knowledge. For instance, knowledge may be general or specific. General or generic knowledge is about classes of situations, events, persons, objects or their properties (in formal terms: its representation features variables. Such knowledge tends to be socially or culturally shared and can be used in many different situations. Specific knowledge is about specific, situated events featuring specific participants (in formal terms: its representation features constants). Such knowledge may be merely (inter)personal, such as (inter)personal experiences, or it may be public and historical, as is the case for the daily events reported by the mass media. General knowledge is often inferred from specific knowledge by generalization and abstraction. Further typologies may distinguish knowledge about 'real' ('historical') vs. fictitious events, concrete vs. abstract properties of the world, more or less secure knowledge, and so on.
8. *Memory representation.* Generic social knowledge as shared by members of an epistemic community is stored in 'semantic' (or 'social') memory, part of Long Term Memory (LTM). Such knowledge is assumed to be organized by various kinds of schemas (scripts, frames) – although as yet we have very little insight into the general organization of (various kinds, areas, etc. of) knowledge in the mind/brain.
9. *Using knowledge.* Items of generic, shared, social knowledge are activated and partly applied (instantiated) in the comprehension of situations, events, etc., in the participation of social interaction and the production and comprehension of discourse.

10. *Mental models.* Discourse comprehension involves the formation of subjective mental models in Episodic Memory (the ‘personal’ or ‘autobiographical’ part of LTM) that are construed from (i) new information derived from the discourse, (ii) information derived from the representation of the communicative context (the context model), (iii) instantiations of socially shared knowledge, and (iv) previous experiences (‘old’ models), and (v) opinions and emotions associated with all this information.
11. *Personal knowledge: subjectivity and intersubjectivity.* Mental models, or personal generalizations from such models, represent ‘personal knowledge’, based on previous experiences. Because models are formed and normalized by the instantiation of socially shared knowledge, subjective mental models of discourse may more or less overlap with those of other members, and hence define intersubjectivity and allow interaction, communication and discourse despite their unique nature.
12. *Knowledge and discourse.* Although knowledge may be derived, directly or indirectly (e.g. by inference) in many ways, for instance by generalization from personal or interpersonal experiences, social knowledge is usually (re)produced by public discourse among the members of a community. In current knowledge societies such reproduction takes place primarily through the mass media, internet, journals, books, and other media, as well as the daily conversations based on the information provided by these media.

We see that even this very succinct summary of some of the properties of knowledge involves cognitive, social and cultural dimensions – most of which have been debated in many controversies. Essential for a theory of the role of knowledge in discourse and domination is that knowledge is *both* cognitive *and* social. It is cognitive because it is stored, shared and distributed as mental representation in the minds of people (and neurologically coded in their brain). It is social because knowledge is (i) shared and distributed among the members of a community, (ii) acquired and changed (also in) social interaction and discourse, (iii) used and applied in social practices, and (iv) institutionally normalized.

Although in social and cultural analyses we may abstract from the sociocognitive nature of knowledge, it should be emphasized – against prevalent antimentalist ideologies in the social sciences – that knowledge, as such, can only be in the minds/brains of people, and more specifically distributed and shared by the minds of people – who also know of other people that they have such knowledge, and hence may presuppose it in interaction and discourse. Such knowledge should be distinguished, theoretically, from the knowledge as it is *used, expressed, formulated* or *implemented*, for instance in action, discourse, textbooks, actions or libraries, among many other types of ‘manifestations’ of knowledge – even if

the 'observable' or socially 'accessible' data we have is only text or talk. In brief, social knowledge, like natural language or grammar, is as such not observable, but a social abstraction from shared mental representations. It only becomes 'observable' (indirectly) in or through social practices, interaction and discourse – and personally through introspection, that is, by reflexive thought.

3. Discourse and knowledge

The next step is to relate knowledge more explicitly with the ways it is typically being acquired, expressed and reproduced in epistemic communities, that is, with text and talk and in interaction and communication in social situations. Some of these relations already have been signaled in the very definition of knowledge: Knowledge is activated and applied (instantiated) in discourse production and comprehension, that is in order (i) to understand words and sentences, (ii) to construe propositions, (iii) to establish coherence relations among propositions, (iv) to infer topics and other general properties of discourse, (v) to infer (construct) actions and interactions, and finally (vi) to build mental models of the events the discourse is about.

I shall further ignore this purely cognitive aspect of the use of knowledge in the production and comprehension of discourse (see Van Dijk and Kintsch 1983; Van Oostendorp and Goldman 1999). However, it should be emphasized that interaction and communication is only possible when participants as social members engage in this kind of neurologically implemented mental process. There are no other (mysterious) – e.g. social – ways that discourse can be produced and understood: Even when knowledge is socially acquired and shared, it is (also and first) mentally stored and mentally applied in discourse and other social practices by individual members of communities.

Relevant for our discussion is the crucial property of social knowledge that it is normally *presupposed in public discourse*. This is also an excellent 'empirical' test of which beliefs count as knowledge in an epistemic community: All the beliefs (information, etc.) we need to understand a news report, a talk show on television or to read a novel – and that is presupposed but not asserted – in such discourse roughly correspond to the knowledge of that epistemic community. In this sense, the epistemic community is at the same time a discourse community, because its members share all the knowledge to understand its public discourses – as well as everyday conversations.

As we shall see below, this does not exclude that the epistemic community may be socially or culturally *stratified*, for instance because of different access to education, media or other forms of knowledge (re)production, and hence that

there are differences of knowledge in the community. A sociology of knowledge then needs to define what kind of ‘basic’ knowledge is presupposed by most forms of generally accessible forms of public discourse, for instance by television news programs.

3.1 Knowledge and context

The relations between discourse and knowledge should theoretically be formulated within a theory of context, because knowledge is a property of the participants, and participants are part of the context. Note though that I do not conceive of context, as is traditionally the case, for instance in sociolinguistics, as an objective social situation or series of conditions. Rather contexts are *dynamic* (ongoingly adapting) *subjective participant definitions of the (for them) relevant properties of the communicative situation*. These definitions are organized by a more or less standard schema consisting of such categories as (i) Setting (Time, Place), (ii) Participants (and their identities, roles and relations), (iii) the ongoing social actions and their goals, and (iv) finally their mutual beliefs about each other’s knowledge. As is the case for all our personal experiences, such subjective definitions of communicative events are represented as mental models in episodic memory, which I call *context models* or simply *contexts* (Van Dijk 2008a, 2009). These context models control all variable structures of text and talk, such as style, so that the discourse is *appropriate* in a given situation. In that sense, context models constitute the basics of the pragmatics of discourse.

For our current discussion, such context models are crucial because they mediate the knowledge and the discourse of participants in interaction and communication. For instance, it is not the ‘objective’ knowledge of the recipient that influences discourse, but the way speakers represent such knowledge in their context models (featuring a model of the current recipients). *The practical question of all talk and text is thus how speakers are able to know what recipients know* – even when they do not personally know these recipients, as is the case for most forms of public discourse.

To solve that problem, speakers use efficient strategies, since obviously they cannot store all recipient knowledge in their own, relatively simple context models. One simple but powerful strategy is to assume that recipients have all general sociocultural knowledge the speaker has, because they belong to the same epistemic community. This is the basis of all sociocultural presuppositions of all discourses among members of a community, as we have seen above. Another strategy takes care of ‘new’ knowledge: Assume that recipients do not know my new knowledge, unless they have had access to the same sources – a strategy that applies both in everyday storytelling as well as to news reports.

Special strategies will be needed to communicate with new members of ‘other’ epistemic communities (children, immigrants, foreigners, non-experts, etc.). Crucial is that in order to speak or write adequately in each community, language users continuously need to adapt their discourse to what (they think) the recipients know already. Context models thus have an efficient Knowledge-device (K-device) that strategically calculates/infers at each moment of text or talk what recipients know already – including what has been communicated before in the current communication event or what they have learned in previous personal conversations or public discourse (such as previous news reports).

3.2 Epistemic strategies

Under the control of the K-device in the context model, language users make use of a large number of discourse structures, moves and strategies that express, manifest or otherwise signal the management of knowledge by the speaker:

- Known vs. unknown objects or persons: definite vs. indefinite articles;
- Objects/persons (not) talked about before: topic vs. comment; word order;
- Explicit vs. implicit information;
- Presupposition vs. assertion;
- Reminders of old knowledge;
- Correction of or challenges to existing knowledge;
- etc.

Thus we see that, in general, the way knowledge may be related to discourse is in the following ways:

1. Explicit assertion;
2. Indirect or implicit assertion: by implication – based on inference;
3. Justification of (new) knowledge (e.g., by proof or argument);
4. Explication of (new) knowledge, e.g., in popularization, textbooks;
5. Reminder of old knowledge;
6. Explicit presupposition of old knowledge;
7. Implicit presupposition of old knowledge;
8. Rejection of old knowledge.

3.3 Justification and credibility

Knowledge can only be efficiently and reliably reproduced through discourse if speakers are found to be credible. Hence, epistemic strategies may need to be based on credibility strategies as soon as (new) knowledge needs to be justified or

‘proven.’ This is not the case for ‘private’ knowledge to which only the speaker has direct access, for instance knowledge about pain or emotions.

As argued before for knowledge criteria or standards, also credibility strategies may vary for different communities and for different contexts and hence for different genres. Strategies of scientific credibility are different from those of everyday life. A scholarly article in a prestigious journal again has other credibility criteria as an informal talk for our own students. Thus discourses may thus epistemically range from strict formal proof and statistical probability to vague, informal arguments. Whereas proof and other forms of justification focus on knowledge itself, credibility is a property assigned to speakers, ‘knowers’ and their actions (discourses). Thus, speakers/writers may be found more credible if

- They have proven themselves before as a credible person (witness, etc.);
- They mention a reliable source for their new knowledge;
- If their knowledge is based on a personal experience;
- If they are experts;
- If they are able to give details of some event or situation;
- If they argue very well in favor of a point of view;
- etc.

These and other conditions of credibility have been the object of research in much classical persuasion and credibility studies in social psychology, as well as studies of knowledge expertise in sociology, and I need not further explore these here (see, e.g., Pratkanis and Aronson 1992; Yuille 1989).

3.4 Discourse, knowledge and society

As is the case for all (powerful) generalizations, also the identification of social knowledge with the set of the presupposed propositions of the public discourses of a community is a generalization and abstraction that needs many qualifications. It is also at that point that the relation of discourse, knowledge and power or domination again enters the picture – as it already did in the social institutionalization of discourse and its criteria in epistemic communities. These social qualifications involve the following, among others (3.5 through 3.7).

3.5 Unequal social distribution of knowledge

I briefly suggested above that although by definition social knowledge is shared by the members of an epistemic community it is not always equally distributed. There are personal and social differences, due to differential access to education,

media access, and so on. That is, even when in very general terms all competent speakers of a language community also share a set of basic knowledge that allows them to interact and communicate, at least in conversation with family members or friends, public discourses may presuppose a set of knowledge shared by 'average' citizens, for instance – in most western and many other societies – citizens with a primary and secondary education. This means that many public discourses may only be partially understood by more or less large groups of citizens. This also means that the discursive acquisition of new knowledge by such citizens may be impaired.

Hence, social inequality leads to discursive inequality, which confirms epistemic inequality, which may again reproduce social inequality. Such a formulation of very global social processes suggests how knowledge, discourse and social structure may be related – and how domination may be (re)produced in society. We may call this the base-line of epistemic and discursive inequality in society: It exists, to a more or less serious degree, in all human societies we know. Empirical studies of such inequality –and of epistemic 'literacy' in general – may involve observations of and interview with authors of public discourse, such as journalists, scholars, politicians, or bureaucrats, on the one hand, as well as experimental or field studies of (the lack of) discourse comprehension by specific groups of citizens, on the other hand (see, e.g., Gavin 1998; Hartley 1982; Wodak 1987).

3.6 Differences of amounts or levels of knowledge

In the same way as general knowledge is not equally distributed in society there is also variation of levels or amounts of knowledge – and its variable distribution in society. Besides the general knowledge shared by all and presupposed anywhere, there are many special sub-communities with special, specialized, knowledge – as is the case for professionals, scholars, and 'experts' in general. However, the discourses of experts presuppose the general knowledge of the community, and it is also in this way that specialized knowledge is acquired in the first place by the newcomers of each sub-community: on the basis of previous 'general' or 'lay' knowledge. Since specialized knowledge is not equally distributed, it may be a scarce power resource, also because it regulates differential access to specialized discourses, and hence to the accumulation of more specialized knowledge – following the general logic of discourse-knowledge relations explain above.

3.7 Elites and access to knowledge

Finally, elites and others who control power in society may also control access to public discourse as well as to various kinds of non-public (corporate, state, bureaucratic or secret) discourses and thus indirectly control knowledge presupposed and produced by such discourse (Van Dijk 2008a). This also means those in control of such discourse types may selectively decide which of the relevant information will be fed into the public sphere, e.g., through the mass media, and thus indirectly manipulate public knowledge formation and change.

After this brief summary of some of the cognitive and social conditions of the production of discourse and knowledge, let us now make these general assumptions more explicit by investigating in more detail the mutual relationships of discourse and knowledge may be socially controlled.

4. Knowledge control by discourse control

Our actions are controlled by our knowledge, and our knowledge is (re)produced by various kinds of discourse and other semiotic practices. Since the elites cannot directly control the minds of citizens, the only efficient alternative they have is to control public discourse. Hence, I should examine in some more detail how structures of discourse are able to control the knowledge of citizens in the first place.

4.1 Context control

The production and comprehension of discourse depends crucially on its context, that is, on the context models ongoingly construed by the participants. So in order to control discourse one needs to control its context. Since contexts, in my theory, are themselves subjective mental models of communicative situations, it does not suffice to merely control the relevant components of communicative situations, such as Settings (Time, Place), Participants (and their roles and relations), as well as the current Acts and their Goals.

Thus, for instance, to control the very production of public discourse, elites may control who have access to press conferences, briefings and other form of restricted communication. Many of the properties of such communicative situations will probably also be represented by the producers of public discourse (e.g., journalists or scholars), but it is crucial that the interpretation of the communicative situations are consistent with those of the elites. In other words, producers of public discourse need to be persuaded to form the mental context models preferred by the elites. Such control may itself need various forms of preliminary

positive self-presentation, for instance of the relevant elite group or institution as reliable, honest, responsible, democratic, expert, and so on.

The same is true for the definition of the recipients – say journalists – who may be invited, addressed and thus defined as experts, as part of a selective group, and other forms of managing their self-image. Next, the very communicative action may be pre-defined as a briefing, as a meeting of experts, as a scholarly seminar, and not as a session of propaganda or indoctrination.

And finally, the predefined goal of such positive communicative acts may be to inform the journalists or the citizens, and not to misinform them. Although trained and critical professional journalists know most of such strategies of context control, several conditions may condition that they are less aware of such manipulation, for instance when deadline pressure does not allow them to consult other sources or if information appears to be validated by independent experts. It is thus not unlikely that the control of context models will at least be partly efficient in some situations of interaction with sources.

Once the sources of public discourses are thus represented as neutral or even as positive (experts, etc.) in the production context models of the journalists, this will most likely control many of the features of – for instance – news reports themselves, for instance in the description of sources ('reliable sources', 'Western spokespersons', etc.) and the presentation of information as 'facts' and not as claims of sources whose reliability is not obvious (see, e.g., Chomsky 1989; Lee and Solomon 1990).

Since contexts as construed by those who produce public discourse are crucial for the production (and comprehension) of the structures of such discourse (which in turn is important for the construction of knowledge), *access* to the communicative situations that influence such context models is of utmost importance (Van Dijk 2008b). It is in this way that elite institutions that want to influence the media make sure whom to invite to press conferences and how (not) to reply to questions asked (Bhatia 2006; Clayman 1993; Maltese 1992), what information to send or supply, the circumstances of briefings as well as special services that may be relevant for journalists (phone facilities, internet access, time of press conference with respect to deadlines, and so on). If counter-information from other sources is known to be available to journalists, such briefings may be used to discredit such sources or their discourses.

Although I have mentioned some well-known and well-studied aspects of news production, it goes without saying that for any kind of public discourse production similar conditions of control hold. This also means that for each genre of public discourse we need to know the structures of their contexts, such as settings, participants and goals. Parliamentary debates, political propaganda, scholarly articles or textbooks each have their own specific production contexts, whose

properties need to be controlled each in their own way. For instance who is recognized or not as a reliable source or expert is one of the crucial conditions of access control that may influence the structures of the discourse itself.

In sum, to control people's action, one needs to control their mind; to control the mind one needs to control knowledge, which requires the control of public discourse, which needs control of the production of such discourse, which finally requires control over the production context models of those who produce public discourse. This complex sequence of control is summarized here to stress that managing the minds of the public, and hence their actions, is a very complex process, with many intermediate steps and conditions of success or failure.

4.2 Topic control

Moving now to the control of discourse itself, we may start with its global semantic level, that is, the control of its topics. Few elements of text and talk are as important – also for the (re)production of knowledge – as the overall topics of discourse, that is, what the discourse is globally about. People may have very different opinions about specific topics, but for the elites it is crucially important that people talk about admissible topics. Thus, immigration or immigrants, terrorism or lack of security are admissible topics, whereas racism, poverty, police violence, and so on, are less preferred topics, and racism of the press is a totally taboo topic in the press (Van Dijk 1991). The classical notion of agenda setting by politicians or the media is based on such topic control (Protest and McCombs 1991).

Controlling topics means controlling the semantic macrostructures of discourse, which in turn control meaning details, on the one hand, and the (macro) structures of mental models, on the other hand (Van Dijk 1980; Van Dijk and Kintsch 1983). In other words, the topics of public discourse will tend to dominate the definition of public events – unless, by counter-interpretation of such public discourse or by personal experience, dissenting citizens are able to construe *alternative definitions* of social events. And finally, preferred interpretations of public events will on the one hand influence further discourse and action with respect to such events, and on the other the (trans) formation of general knowledge, for instance by generalization and abstraction.

4.3 Local meanings

Whereas discourse topics implement the global meanings of underlying mental models and hence are essential for the overall 'definition of the situation' talked or written about, local meanings provide the lower level semantic details of the

ways speakers or writers interpret events and situations. At this level of propositions and their internal structures, as well as of sequences of propositions we find many moves and strategies that may influence the knowledge construction of recipients.

As is the case for all ideological discourse that combines positive self-presentation of the ingroup with negative presentation of outgroups, also the (re)production of knowledge may be biased in favor of the dominant elites that control such discourse (Van Dijk 1998). Whereas most ideological discourses specifically expresses opinions and attitudes, and hence presupposes ideological group values and norms, discourse that manipulates the knowledge of the recipients appears to be factual and hence to represent 'real' states of affairs. The semantic moves, thus, tend to be geared towards the goal to enhance the objectivity, the reliability and hence the credibility of speakers and writers.

4.4 Actors

Traditionally, propositions are defined to consist of n -place predicates and n arguments, possibly modified by modal expressions (see, e.g., Saeed 1997). The arguments may have different semantic roles, such as agent, experiencer, patient, object, and so on (Fillmore 1968). For our purposes, such an analysis is relevant because in discourse not all arguments need to be expressed explicitly, as is the case in passive constructions and nominalizations. Thus, dominant discourses may grant that there is 'discrimination' of women or minorities in society, but may want to mitigate the responsible role of the discriminating agents, such as men or white people, respectively. Although text and context, as well as knowledge of the world, may often provide the clues for the correct inference about who the actors of such negative actions are, it is likely that such inferences will be drawn less often than when agents are explicitly mentioned in agent roles. Instead of representing an event as an action, such structures tend to favor an interpretation, and hence representation in the mental models of the recipients, in terms of a natural phenomenon without responsible social actors, such as a draught or an avalanche. Whereas this is the case both for passive sentences and nominalizations, the latter may even leave the victims of negative actions implicit. Obviously, such a representation of social situations will be specifically favored if the elites themselves are responsible for such negative actions, as is the case for the restrictive immigration limitations, police violence against minorities, bureaucratic red-tape or exacerbating popular racism. *Thus, propositionally incomplete discourse may lead to incomplete mental models of events, which in term may be generalized to incomplete general knowledge of such events* (for analysis of concrete examples

of nominalizations and passivization in the press coverage of ethnic conflicts, see, among many other studies, e.g., Fowler et al. 1979; Van Dijk 1991).

4.5 Predicates

The choice of predicates fundamentally influences the way events, action and situations are being defined. Thus, as we know from many critical analyses, the ‘action’ of the USA, the UK and their allies in Iraq may be – and has been – variously defined as an invasion, an occupation, a military action or as a liberation, depending on one’s ideological positions (Schechter 2005). Thus, the choice of predicates, as expressed by different lexical items, may be controlled by the overall ideological ‘version of reality’ the authors prefer.

Predicates may also be construed in (more or less) *metaphorical* terms – for instance when large-scale immigration is typically represented by the media and by politicians as an invasion, as waves or as an avalanche – thus exacerbating the negative models of citizens about immigrants and immigration (Van Dijk 1991, 1993).

4.6 Modalities

Modalities make propositions out of propositions, as is the case for the existential modalities ‘it is necessary (probable, possible) that.’ Obviously, such modalities again provide different views of states of affairs whose certainty is not (yet) established (Bybee and Fleischman 1995; Liebert et al. 1997).

Thus, a military action against Iraq seems more justified if it is asserted that Saddam Hussein (SH) *must* have weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) than when it is assumed that he *may* have such weapons. And vice versa, representing bombing Iraq as *possibly* causing ‘collateral damage’ rather than as *necessarily* having civilian victims, again more or less (de)emphasizes the negative actions of the ingroup of the speaker or writer. These well-known examples suggest that modalities not just present different versions of the world, in terms of different degrees of certainty, but also more or less convincing justification of actions that are conditions or consequences of other actions. Again, it may be assumed that, especially if such biased uses are repeated many times, the resulting mental recipient models of the events talked about may be more or less positive about the responsible elites. In that sense, modal expressions may have the same implications as euphemisms and more generally contribute to the (more or less) positive representation of those who control public discourse or the elites such discourse talks about (government, president, military, police, etc.).

4.7 Implications and presuppositions

We know that discourses are like icebergs – the vast part of their meanings must be derived by the recipients through the application of their general knowledge in the construction of their models of the events referred to by the discourse, and hence such meanings remain invisible, implicit. If such propositions are in turn needed to interpret following expressions in a discourse, such implied propositions may have the function of presuppositions of later propositions (Deemter and Kibble 2002).

Such a general semantic property of discourse may of course be applied in forms of knowledge manipulation, namely when recipients are induced to make preferred inferences from what is said. Sometimes such inferences are even necessary in order to construe local coherence (see below). Thus, if it is repeated that Iraq has WMDs, then such is not merely a description of a state of affairs, but a description that, because of general knowledge about such weapons and their use, may lead to a host of more or less plausible implications, such as ‘Iraq is dangerous (for us, for the world)’, ‘We have to take action against such a danger’, etc. Describing the same situation in terms such as ‘Iraq has the same nuclear defense capability as Israel’ would obviously not have such implications.

It should be stressed that these semantic implications are seldom (necessary) entailments (like ‘Iraq has nuclear weapons’ entails ‘Iraq has weapons of mass destruction’), but rather *implicatures*, that is, implications based on ‘plausible’ inferences based on common sense world knowledge – that is, the shared knowledge of the public sphere (Potts 2005).

4.8 Local coherence

Sequences of propositions in discourse are coherent (for speakers and recipients) if they have a mental model (referential coherence) and/or if the propositions themselves are meaningfully related, for instance by a relation of generalization vs. specification (functional coherence) (Van Dijk 1977). Precisely because of the general knowledge shared by the members of the discourse community, referential coherence may be indirect, that is, propositions are derived from general knowledge and inserted in the sequence of propositions so as to make them coherent – as represented in the mental model of recipients (Van Dijk and Kintsch 1983).

This basis aspect of discourse coherence may be abused of to manipulate recipients into deriving propositions that the author(s) themselves have not formulated explicitly – and can hence always deny. Thus, political or media discourse may link increasing immigration and a rising crime rate, but without explicitly stating the proposition that recipients must derive so as to understand the

discourse as coherent, namely that immigrants are (more) criminal than nationals. More specifically, thus, events or situations may be described as jointly being the case, without making explicit the preferred reading that the relation is in fact one of causality: increasing immigration causes a rising crime rate.

4.9 Granularity of description

I shall use the photo metaphor of ‘granularity’ to summarize a set of crucial semantic moves such as level of description of persons, actions, events or situations (generality vs. specificity, many or few details, and more or less vagueness). Again, the overall strategy of ideological polarization may apply here: A more specific, detailed and sharp description will be given of the positive acts of outgroup members, and a more general, detailed and vague description of the bad actions of ‘our’ government, military, police, courts, and so on. In the first case mental models are equally specific, detailed and sharp, and may thus be remembered better than a very general and vague model.

4.10 Actor and action descriptions

Within the same overall strategy of ideologically based positive ingroup descriptions and outgroup derogation, the description of actors and actions may yield biased versions of accounts. This is not just the case for the positive or negative lexical items used to describe actors, as is the case for the paradigmatic examples of ‘terrorists’ vs. ‘freedom fighters’, but also for the very identification of actors, for instance in terms of their first and/or last names (‘Saddam Hussein’, or ‘Saddam’), their positions (‘dictator’ or ‘president’), group membership, their relations with us (‘enemy’), as part of a collective (‘head of a regime’) and so on, which may signal more or less distance or affect/animosity towards actors (Van Leeuwen 1996).

4.11 Rhetoric

Already in classical rhetoric a detailed description was given of the specific discursive moves (‘figures of speech’) being used in legal or political persuasion. Since such rhetorical moves generally function so as to mitigate or enhance underlying meanings, they are particularly efficient in the well-known polarization of ideological discourse. Thus, we have seen above that personas, actions or situations may be described in more or less exaggerated (hyperbolic) or mitigated terms (euphemisms), as is the case for the use of comparisons or conceptual metaphors (e.g. IMMIGRATION IS AN INVASION).

Strictly speaking the rhetorical modulation of the representation of events need not express the underlying model of the speaker, but rather consist of a set of discursive moves that enhances the probability that just such a model will be accepted by the recipients. Thus, speakers do not necessarily view immigration as a (military) invasion, but the use of a metaphor from a military semantic domain may be associated with an alien threat, as part of the script of an invasion, and it may be that notion that is retained in the mental model of the recipients (see also Lakoff 2002; Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Emphasizing meanings may also affect the activation or formation of emotive or evaluative dimensions of a mental model – which is a potent condition for its later reactivation when it is needed: Emotive mental models of immigration and immigrants are better retrievable and hence more available for later discourse and social practices.

4.12 Speech acts

Moving from discourse meaning to discourse as action, also the illocutionary ‘meanings’ of text and talk play a fundamental role in the representation of reality as the elites want to promote it. Thus, politicians and media may describe the possibility of WMDs in Iraq by making assertions, on the one hand, or by accusing Saddam Hussein of hiding such weapons.

That is, specific speech acts presuppose or imply a specific representation of actions, actors or events: An accusation presupposes that the speaker believes that an action is wrong or bad, and by association also the actor.

Thus, although newspapers are seldom more powerful than governments or the State, editorials may hint at, suggest, advise or enjoin governments to (not) take political action. They may thus show (or abuse of) more or less power – as when, e.g., the British tabloids enjoin the Labour Government to further restrict immigration, a speech act that may well be interpreted as a threat. Such pragmatic variation may not directly imply a different version of a state of affairs, e.g., as represented in a mental model of some social or political situation, but it does of course presuppose or imply another aspect of the political situation as a ‘fact’, such as the power of the tabloids in shaping government policy.

4.13 Interaction

More generally, discourse as interaction may also presuppose, imply or control the formation of preferred mental models of speakers or writers. This may, first of all, happen by the limitation of the very presence and participation of speech partners, as we have seen in the account of context control, and as we know from

who is being allowed as legitimate interlocutor in negotiations and other forms of political interaction. Secondly, participation may be limited to specific roles: People may only be allowed to participate as passive listeners (for instance as jurors in trials in the USA), and not as active speakers, or they may only be allowed to speak at specific moments, as is the case for witnesses, or only as engaging in specific speech acts (making statements, and not as asking questions or making accusations. Similarly, as in parliament, speakers may only be allotted a few minutes to talk. Thirdly, turn taking may be more or less strictly controlled, as is the case in many forms of institutional interaction, for instance in parliamentary debates, trials, classrooms or formal meetings. Such control may effectively limit the ways participants are able to give their own version of the facts, and hence may be efficiently used to limit or censor alternative views.

In sum, there are many restrictions on institutional interaction that maybe abused of by more powerful groups (parties, politicians, etc.) so as to limit the (re) production of public knowledge, namely by limiting access to participation, settings (time and place), access to specific speech acts, access to topics, and even to access of descriptions of others (which for instance may be censored by Speakers in parliament or by judges in a trial, for instance in terms of an instance of contempt of court).

Similar restrictions may hold, as we have seen above, in the very interactions that define public discourse production, for instance in press conference of powerful politicians or institutions, in which some journalists will be invited or admitted and not others. And the same may happen again when some sources or spokespersons will be approached by, or permitted to speak to journalists, and not others – a selection that in general is in favor of the elites. More detailed analysis of talk in interaction, especially in organizations and institutions may reveal more subtle ways of favoring or limiting specific mental models of reality and thus the acquisition of knowledge in the public sphere.

5. An example: Tony Blair's *knowledge* in his Iraq speech in parliament

Let me finally illustrate this theoretical analysis of the relations between discourse, knowledge and domination, by an analysis of some fragments of one of the Iraq speeches of Tony Blair in the British House of Parliament (see appendix). In his crucial speech of 13 March 2003, Blair persuades the House to accept his Iraq policy and allow British soldiers to join the US forces to invade Iraq. Obviously, such a speech has a vast amount of persuasive elements, but I shall only focus on those that are related to the ways knowledge is being managed in such a speech. Basically, as we well know, this and many other speeches, also by Bush and Aznar,

are premised on the claim that Iraq has WMDs and helps international terrorism. That is, such a claim is not merely an empty accusation, as a suspicion, let alone as a pretext for an attack that may have other reasons (say oil, political control of the Middle East, etc.), but must show that the accusations are based on facts, and hence represent *knowledge* of the speakers and not mere beliefs. Hence, among other strategies, Blair (and Bush and Aznar), must show undeniable facts, reliable and expert sources or valid inferences, following the generally accepted criteria of parliamentary, legal or scientific debates. (For my previous publications of this speech of Blair, studied from different perspectives, see Van Dijk 2003b, 2006, 2008a, 2009).

Let us examine in some more detail how Blair does just this.

5.1 Context

Since context models control the way he speaks, I first of all need to examine the (hypothetical) structures of Blair's context model. That is, firstly, he needs to be aware of the Setting, that is, of date/time of the debate as well as its place/location in the UK House of Commons. Secondly, he needs to be aware minimally of his own current communicative role as speaker, as his political roles as Prime Minister and as Leader of the Labour Party, and so on, as well as of the respective roles of the recipients, that is, as Members of Parliament (MPs), members of various parties, and finally their current positions as supportive or opposed to his Iraq policy – even within his own party. Then, Blair needs to represent his discourse as a special social and political action, such as addressing parliament, defending a motion, doing politics, and so on. Finally, such actions need to be represented also as having specific intentions or goals, and Blair needs to represent the recipients as having general knowledge (of course) as well as some specific knowledge about the current political situation and well as of parliamentary affairs.

What Blair's context models especially needs to control is to help establish or confirm his credibility. If even his own party members oppose or have doubts about his Iraq policy, his epistemic strategies need to be very persuasive. Only when the 'facts' of SHs belligerent or terrorist policies can be established without doubt, he may hope to persuade at least some undecided MPs to vote for the motion,

5.2 Explicit knowledge

It is important to stress that when we claim to know something and want to express such knowledge in discourse, we usually do so merely asserting what we know, and need not do so with an explicit epistemic main clause ('I know

that...’) or another explicit reference to our knowledge. So most of what Tony Blair claims to know – for instance about Iraq, Saddam Hussein or the WMDs, he states without labeling it as knowledge. Indeed, often when people explicitly claim to ‘know’ something, this presupposes that either such knowledge is merely belief or conviction, or that others have expressed doubt about the matter. So, before I examine the strategies for the management of knowledge, let us briefly consider the few cases in which Blair explicitly says he knows (or we know) something (the relevant words are rendered in bold) (the transcription is the one used by Hansard):

(1)

1 There are glib and sometimes foolish comparisons with the 1930s. I am not
2 suggesting for a moment that anyone here is an appeaser or does not share
3 our revulsion at the regime of Saddam. However, there is one relevant point
4 of analogy. It is that, with history, **we know** what happened. We can look
5 back and say, “There’s the time; that was the moment; that’s when we
6 should have acted.” However, the point is that it was not clear at the time –
7 not at that moment. In fact, at that time, many people thought such a fear
8 fanciful or, worse, that it was put forward in bad faith by warmongers. (...)
9 Now, of course, should Hitler again appear in the same form, **we would**
10 **know** what to do. But the point is that history does not declare the future to
11 us plainly. Each time is different and the present must be judged without the
12 benefit of hindsight.

Thus, when Blair in line 4 claims that “we know what happened” and in (9–10), “we would know what to do”, he refers to a general property of knowledge, namely the certainty of post-hoc knowledge about historical facts, compared to the less secure knowledge of current events and their possible consequences. Such a general account in this fragment is part of an argumentation that concludes that, since we now *do* know what is the case in Iraq, we need to act.

Then there is a passage in which Blair uses the predicate “to know” several times in the same paragraph:

(2)

1 Let me tell the House what **I know**. **I know** that there are some countries, or
2 groups within countries, that are proliferating and trading in weapons of
3 mass destruction – especially nuclear weapons technology. **I know** that there
4 are companies, individuals, and some former scientists on nuclear weapons
5 programmes, who are selling their equipment or expertise. **I know** that there
6 are several countries – mostly dictatorships with highly repressive regimes –
7 that are desperately trying to acquire chemical weapons, biological weapons
8 or, in particular, nuclear weapons capability. Some of those countries are

9 now a short time away from having a serviceable nuclear weapon. This
 10 activity is not diminishing. It is increasing.
 11 **We all know** that there are terrorist groups now operating in most major
 12 countries. Just in the past two years, around 20 different nations have
 13 suffered serious terrorist outrages.

Besides the rhetorical aspect of emphasizing his knowledge by the explicit and repeated reference to it, Blair affirms such knowledge as a basis of debate – as premises of ‘historical facts’ that no one can deny, whatever the further differences of opinion about what to do. Instead of a direct predication (e.g. “Some countries are proliferating...”), the format of the knowledge statements is in terms of existentials: “I know that there are...” Notice that he first presents his knowledge as personal knowledge, although it’s assumed factual, historical knowledge should by definition be shared knowledge – as he asserts in line 11, when he changes footing to a shared or even universal knowledge: “we all know...”. So what is the function here of this ‘personal’ knowledge Blair wants to share (“let me tell”) with the explicitly addressed MPs (“the House”)? Obviously, he could hardly have said “Let me tell the House what we know”, because such would have been a pragmatic contradiction. Also, it is no knowledge only Blair or his sources are privy to, because he talks about generally known facts. Such an expression, therefore, emphasizes that these are the facts he has taken as premises for his personal conclusion that such facts now also apply to the main point currently under debate, namely that also Saddam Hussein has such weapons. In other words, he is using general, shared political knowledge all or most MPs probably share, for an account of his own policy regarding Iraq. Implied, in such a case, is of course, that anyone who agrees with premises must actually reach the same conclusion.

As suggested, as soon as the predicate *to know* is explicitly used to express one’s knowledge, it has special functions, and does not merely refer to such knowledge. Often, indeed, there may be no knowledge at all, but mere speculation, as in the following fragment:

- (3) Let us recall: what was shocking about 11 September was not just the slaughter of innocent people but the **knowledge that**, had the terrorists been able, there would have been not 3,000 innocent dead, but 30,000 or 300,000 – and the more the suffering, the greater their rejoicing.

Actually, in this fragment we not only have misleading use of the word “knowledge” in order to refer to a crucial speculation, but also the use of “recall”, which again presupposes reference to historical facts and that the recipients may have ‘forgotten’ this fact.

An interesting form of ‘personal’ knowledge is explicitly expressed (twice) in the following fragment:

- (4) At the heart of that division is the concept of a world in which there are rival poles of power, with the US and its allies in one corner and France, Germany, Russia and their allies in the other. I do not believe that all those nations intend such an outcome, but that is what now faces us. I believe such a vision to be misguided and profoundly dangerous for our world. I **know** why it arises. There is resentment of US predominance. There is fear of US unilateralism. People ask, “Do the US listen to us and our preoccupations?” And there is perhaps a lack of full understanding of US preoccupations after 11 September. I **know all this**. But the way to deal with it is not rivalry, but partnership.

In this case we do not have a personalization of generally shared knowledge, as is the case in the example examined above, but rather a personal explanation of generally shared knowledge, namely about the fact that some European countries oppose US policy about Iraq and that such creates a division in the world. This explanation is given in terms of another assumed fact (namely the fear of US domination) and an assumption (“perhaps”) that not all people understand US preoccupations. Of course, linking two (known) facts in an explanation does not produce (causal) knowledge, especially since many people opposed to the intervention of the UK and Spain in Iraq did not fear the world dominance of those countries. Hence, the “I know” in this case is rather about people’s fears, and hence an expression of empathy, and such an expression of empathy with emotions is used as an explanation of people’s opinions, and at the same time as a concession, namely that such a reaction is comprehensible – given the (tacit) presumption of current US hegemony. Hence also the following use of “but” – which suggests that the preceding concession was rather the well-known apparent concession of one of the dominant strategic disclaimers of Blair in this debate: ‘I understand you, I understand my opponents, etc., but we need to act against Iraq all the same’.

Finally, the only other use of explicit knowledge in his speech comes at its rhetorical conclusion:

- (5) This is not the time to falter. This is the time not just for this Government – or, indeed, for this Prime Minister – but for this House to give a lead: to show that we will stand up for what **we know** to be right; to show that we will confront the tyrannies and dictatorships and terrorists who put our way of life at risk; to show, at the moment of decision, that we have the courage to do the right thing.

This conclusion is not just a conclusion of what we know to be the case (about Saddam Hussein, about Iraq, about dictatorships, etc.), but a moral conclusion following from such knowledge, namely that it is ‘right’ to act against such facts. Obviously, the personal perspective here has given way to a general, shared perspective, indexically referred to here as “we”, that is including Blair and his government as well as the House, those who must take the decision to act. Note that the expression “to show that we will stand up for what we know to be right” presupposes first of all that we will stand up, and then that we know to be right. But in this case such knowledge is not shared knowledge about facts, but moral conviction – to have no doubt that one is doing the right thing, and that we are justified to have such a conviction.

5.3 Belief

In a speech that mainly expresses opinions, one would expect to find many times an expression of belief. Not so in Blair’s speech though. The strong conviction he declares to be shared knowledge at the end of his speech, at the beginning of his speech appears as belief, but not just common belief:

(6) I **believe** passionately that we must hold firm to that course.

Similarly, later on his belief is also described in terms of a special kind of belief, namely as “true belief”, which is tantamount to knowledge, as also the repeated use of ‘truth’ suggests:

(7) I truly **believe** that our fault has not been impatience. The truth is that our patience should have been exhausted weeks and months and even years ago.

This and related moves may be interpreted as part of an argumentative strategy in which debatable opinion – typically attributed by his opponents – is here countered by a type of belief, conviction, that is equivalent to ‘true’ knowledge. See also the following example:

(8) So let me explain to the House why I **believe** that the threat that we face today is so serious and why we must tackle it.

Here we find the normal use of believe as an expression of a personal opinion, and in this case referring to the reasons for Blair’s policy. However, also this formulation is not merely one of belief, but also hides a presupposition of a (debatable) fact, namely that we face a threat today. The belief only applies to the seriousness of the threat and what we should do about it, but not to the threat itself. Also, expressing a belief in the seriousness of a threat is itself a form of belief that is not

trivial (indeed, the use of plural “we” in “we face” suggests more than just ‘we’ in parliament or in the UK) but should itself be taken seriously, that is, as a warning based on facts.

The following example has another interesting use of a repeated use of “I believe” as an answer to a member of Blair’s party (identified indexically – and traditionally in UK parliament – as ‘honorable friend’):

- (9) Secondly, to my hon. Friend, yes, I do support what the President said. Do not be in any doubt at all – Iraq has been supporting terrorist groups. For example, Iraq is offering money to the families of suicide bombers whose purpose is to wreck any chance of progress in the middle east. Although I said that the associations were loose, they are hardening. **I do believe** that, and **I believe** that the two threats coming together are the dangers that we face in our world.

Here the question is whether or not we should believe President George Bush and his rather widely doubted accusations (about WMDs, about the association of Iraq with terrorism). Blair can hardly deny such widespread doubts, and he actually appears to make a concession (“loose” associations), which however turns about to be another disclaimer (“Although...”). Again, the belief is itself based on “hardening” associations, metonymically related to “hard evidence”, that is, the basis of true knowledge. Secondly, the belief is again about major threats in the world, and hence not just a marginal, irrelevant, personal belief, but a serious situation that threatens all of us. Such apocalyptic beliefs, as we have seen, come close to very strong convictions, so much so that they appear like religious beliefs, which within relevant epistemic and doxastic communities is the same as knowledge. See also a fragment of an example I cited before when I analyzed the knowledge expressed in the same example:

- (10a) **I do not believe** that all those nations intend such an outcome, but that is what now faces us. **I believe** such a vision to be misguided and profoundly dangerous for our world.

Again, in the perceived division in the world (for or against the US) the belief is again associated with collective danger, that is, something we share, and hence has a status close to political or moral ‘knowledge.’ The same association of strong belief as moral conviction associated with catastrophe is formulated at the end of the speech:

- (10b) To retreat now, **I believe**, would put at hazard all that we hold dearest.

In the following fragment, strong conviction is expressed about what others doubt (negatively described as “cynicism”): US commitment to peace in the Middle East.

- (11) **I do not believe** that there is any other issue with the same power to reunite the world community than progress on the issues of Israel and Palestine. Of course, there is cynicism about recent announcements, but the United States is now committed – **and, I believe genuinely** – to the road map for peace designed in consultation with the UN.

The first part of this fragment may be interpreted as a disclaimer, because it concedes a point made by Blair’s opponents (that any peace in the Middle East is unthinkable without peace between Israel and Palestine), and hence is an obvious move of positive self-presentation. The second part of the example is an explicit disclaimer (“Of course...”), conceding that maybe the USA might not be believed on earlier occasions, introducing a positive representation of the USA – as Blair’s ally. Notice again that the belief is not mere belief but “genuine” belief, that is, there is evidence for the USA being committed: Blair’s beliefs tend to be presented as moral convictions or as ‘true’ beliefs that in fact are as much as knowledge to him.

This may also be one of the reasons why in his whole speech Blair never uses the belief expressions “I suppose” or “I doubt”, and the normal belief statement (“I think”) only once:

- (12) **I think** that the hon. Gentleman would also agree that unless the threat of action was made, it was unlikely that Saddam would meet the tests.

Notice though that in this case the belief (“I think”) is not about the situation in Iraq, but merely a politeness formula to attribute (assumed) agreement to an opponent – and this agreement again presupposes shared belief, or even knowledge about a threat.

5.4 Presuppositions

Theoretically, I have assumed that all shared sociocultural knowledge should be implicitly presupposed, whereas recent or new knowledge (e.g., part of text or context) as well as opinions tend to be explicitly presupposed, that is repeated in the text, typically so with topicalized *that*-clauses.

In the examples examined above, we already have found many presuppositions, also well-known strategic presuppositions that purport to be based on shared knowledge, but in fact are not shared knowledge at all but only personal

opinion. Let us examine a few other special cases of presupposition in Blair's speech. Consider the following examples.

- (13, 1) That is the democracy that is our right, but that others struggle for in vain.
- (13, 2) the future of the Iraqi people who have been brutalised by Saddam for so long,
- (13, 3) It will determine the way in which Britain and the world confront the central security threat of the 21st century,
- (13, 4) It became clear, after the Gulf war, that Iraq's WMD ambitions were far more extensive than had hitherto been thought
- (13, 5) Iraq admitted that it had previously undeclared weapons of mass destruction, but it said that it had destroyed them.
- (13, 6) He disclosed a far more extensive biological weapons programme
- (13, 7) Their final report is a withering indictment of Saddam's lies, deception and obstruction, with large quantities of weapons of mass destruction unaccounted for.
- (13, 8) (Resolution 1441) rehearses the fact that he has for years been in material breach of 17 UN resolutions.
- (13, 9) What is perfectly clear is that Saddam is playing the same old games in the same old way.

Examining these fragments of Blair's speech, we see that the presuppositions, generally expressed by relative clauses (13, 1; 13, 2), definite noun phrases (13, 3), indefinite noun phrases (13, 6), nominalizations (13, 7) and that-clauses (13, 4; 13, 5; 13, 8; 13, 9), nearly all imply a very negative description of Saddam Hussein or his regime – demonization also showed in other studies (see, e.g., Martín-Rojo 1995). It is presupposed that Saddam (or his regime) brutalised his people, that he had extensive WMD ambitions, undeclared WMDs, extensive biological weapons, that Iraq (Saddam Hussein) is lying, deceiving and obstructing, that it is in material breach of UN resolutions and playing the same old game. That is, the presuppositions are not so much presupposed as incontrovertible facts, but rather accusations that are presented as facts. By the same polarized ideology, it is presupposed in (13, 1) that *we* are democratic. Perhaps most telling is the political summary of these presuppositions in the presupposition that for the UK and the world Iraq is the central security threat of the 21st century, which by definition can't be something Blair already knows about the future, but that rather constitutes an opinion. It is precisely this opinion that is construed as the crucial motive to invade Iraq. That is, we here have the underlying logic of the polemical notion of the 'preemptive strike'. Some of the presuppositions are defined as such by such factive predicates as 'to admit', 'to disclose', 'it is clear that', and 'the fact that', which are quite typical in political and legal accusations.

In sum, the presuppositional structure of Blair's intervention rather faithfully reflects the pragmatic nature of his speech as "withering indictment" as he calls the report of the weapons inspectors against Saddam Hussein. Today, we all 'know' (!) that the crucial 'facts' (WMDs, links with terrorism) Blair presupposed were mere assumptions, if not lies.

For the argument of this paper, it is important to conclude that political speeches of leaders of democratic countries, and in front of democratically elected MPs, may thus transform beliefs and opinions into knowledge of facts used as an excuse to go to war – a war that eventually will have a total death toll far exceeding that of the victims of Saddam Hussein and his regime. This is consistent with the previous finding that if Blair says that he 'believes' something, this usually means that this is a very strong conviction of the 'truth' and hence a form of knowledge.

One of the properties of the manipulative nature of this speech, therefore, resides in this transformation of speculation and opinion into claims and accusations based on facts, and that hence the British MPs hardly had another alternative but to accept his war policy. Of course, he also does so with many others means, not dealt with in this papers, such as nationalist rhetoric (we cannot 'stand British troops down', etc.), the construction of external threats, and argumentation (for a more general theoretical treatment and further analysis of Blair's Iraq speech, see Van Dijk 2006).

5.5 Validation and evidentiality: Sources

One of the defining characteristics that distinguish knowledge from mere belief or opinion is that knowledge consists of beliefs that are *justified* by the criteria of the epistemic community. That is, in most contexts, when beliefs are not obviously true, speakers need to show why they think they are valid. Such validation may take many forms, but we may distinguish three general classes, which we find in everyday conversation, scientific discourse as well as in political speeches: observation, sources and inference. Moreover, these three epistemic standards must be reliable (trustworthy, correct, expert, etc.), where of course such reliability may differ in different contexts.

Since Blair was not in Iraq to directly observe or suffer oppression, nor has himself witnessed the manufacture of WMD, or assisted to meetings between Saddam Hussein and terrorist leaders, his knowledge must be based on (reliable) sources – and on the inferences of the discourses of such sources. This is indeed what we see: His claims about the threat of Iraq to the UK and the world are presented as being based on the evidence of experts, such as the UN weapon

inspectors. Let us examine such validation moves in somewhat more detail. Consider, for instance, the following examples.

- (14) Saddam's son-in-law, Hussein Kamal, defected to Jordan. He disclosed a far more extensive biological weapons programme and, for the first time, said that Iraq had weaponised the programme – something that Saddam had always strenuously denied. All this had been happening while the inspectors were in Iraq.

Kamal also revealed Iraq's crash programme to produce a nuclear weapon in the 1990s. Iraq was then forced to release documents that showed just how extensive those programmes were. In November 1996, Jordan intercepted prohibited components for missiles that could be used for weapons of mass destruction. Then a further "full and final declaration" was made. That, too, turned out to be false.

Whereas elsewhere the weapons inspectors were used as reliable sources, who however finally did not discover evidence of the production of WMDs, Blair also relies on the evidence of Saddam Hussein's son, who after his defection can hardly be seen as a reliable source, and yet Blair uses the factive predicates *to disclose* and *to reveal* to present Kamal's accusations as statements of facts. But more seriously, also Blair's presentation of the 'findings' of the internationally recognized experts is hardly unbiased:

- (15) First, let us recap the history of Iraq and weapons of mass destruction. In April 1991, after the Gulf war, Iraq was given 15 days to provide a full and final declaration of all its weapons of mass destruction. Saddam had used the weapons against Iran and against his own people, causing thousands of deaths. He had had plans to use them against allied forces. It became clear, after the Gulf war, that Iraq's WMD ambitions were far more extensive than had hitherto been thought. So the issue was identified by the United Nations at that time as one for urgent remedy. UNSCOM, the weapons inspection team, was set up. It was expected to complete its task, following the declaration, at the end of April 1991. The declaration, when it came, was false: a blanket denial of the programme, other than in a very tentative form. And so the 12-year game began.

This is the first paragraph in which Blair, after his opening statement, begins his argument to support his policy, and he does so, initially by a historical review, presented as facts. The established truth in this statement is that Saddam Hussein used nerve gas against his own people. But the statement "he had plans to use them against the allied forces" is an accusation for which no evidence is given (indeed, in court such an assertion would be objected to as speculation), nor that

“it became clear that Iraq WMD ambitions were far more extensive than had hitherto been thought”. The main point of this paragraph as well as the following ones is to mingle reference to the UNSCOM weapon inspectors with accusations that are not directly based on conclusions of the weapon inspectors. Observe how reference is made to the constitution of UNSCOM, and that *unrelated to that* it is claimed that the declaration of Saddam Hussein was false. The claim about the “false declarations” is repeated several times in the following paragraph, but never based on facts as established by the weapon inspectors.

It might have been true that Iraq (or Saddam Hussein) had plans or ambitions, but there was no direct proof that they actually were carrying them out. Indeed, one and a half year later, in early October 2004, the CIA itself, which had been among those who made the accusations against Iraq in the first place, had to recognize that, at the time of the invasion in March 2003 had no WMDs, and that in fact since the Gulf War in 1991 it had destroyed its WMD capability. Thus, Tony Blair’s repeated accusations that Iraq’s declarations were false appeared itself to be false, and not sustained by any direct and clear evidence, but rather motivated by suspicions based on earlier actions of Saddam Hussein (as signaled in this passage), his aggression against Kuwait and his general character as a particularly bloody dictator (elsewhere in Blair’s talk).

To suggest direct evidence, Blair actually cites from a recent “remarkable” inspection report by UNMOVIC (of March 7, 2003), such as:

(16)

- “Documentation available to UNMOVIC suggests that Iraq at least had had far reaching plans to weaponise VX”
- “up to 450 mustard filled aerial bombs unaccounted for”
- “Iraq’s potential production of anthrax could have been in the range of about 15,000 to 25,000 litres”
- “Based on all the available evidence, the strong presumption is that about 10,000 litres of anthrax was not destroyed and may still exist”.

These direct quotes are presented as proof by Blair, but even his probably most selective quotes only speak of “suggest”, “Iraq had plans”, “bombs unaccounted for”, “could have been”, “strong presumption”, and “may still exist”. None of the quotations used by Blair himself are based on facts, but only appear to be speculations about plans or potentialities.

Again, we now know (and Blair knows) that what he presented as firm evidence by a long series of evidentials are itself at best assumptions made on the basis of speculations about a possible threat, and more likely wishful accusations to legitimate a war. Relevant for this paper is that beliefs and speculations in crucial

political speeches of this kind are presented as knowledge based on reliable sources, but that on closer inspection even such 'evidence' appears not to stand up: Nowhere do the conclusions of the weapon inspectors support Blair's much more adamant claims.

The same is true for the 'tests' Blair talks about after quoting the weapon inspectors, that is, tests that would show that Saddam Hussein was lying. The problem was that SH did not comply with the test, and that this was interpreted as a recognition that he must have hidden WMDs – which again is no proof that he had them.

In the same way, as soon as SH *does* produce evidence that Iraq did not have WMDs, Blair must of course imply that this was no evidence at all, and that SH was probably lying again:

- (17) What makes him now issue invitations to the inspectors, discover documents that he said he never had, produce evidence of weapons supposed to be non-existent, and destroy missiles he said he would keep? It is the imminence of force.

In this fragment Blair does two things at the same time, namely imply that SH was devious or lying again ("discover documents that he said he never had", etc.) and argue that SH only complies with international demands when he is under direct threat of force. That is, we find a move of the usual negative other-presentation strategy of his speech, together with the crucial backing of his policy, namely that only military action will have an influence on SH. At the same time, the implications of this very passage are inconsistent with the war rhetoric, because on the one hand it implies, firstly, that if SH indeed had no WMDs he was not lying from the start, secondly, that there is no longer a real and imminent international danger, and hence no reason for an invasion, and, thirdly, that apparently the threat of force is sufficient to get the information one wanted – so that also for that reason a real war and invasion may not be necessary at all.

Of course, Blair knows as much, as a crucial passage shows summarizing the arguments of his opponents:

- (18) The real problem is that, underneath, people dispute that Iraq is a threat, dispute the link between terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, and dispute, in other words, the whole basis of our assertion that the two together constitute a fundamental assault on our way of life.

Obviously these other people are not used as sources of evidence, but only as a political problem (they are also people in his own party, and a majority in his own and in most EU countries) – namely to get support for his policy. To meet

their arguments he uses the beginning of the Second World War as a comparison, although with a disclaimer about “glib comparisons”.

5.6 Argumentation

Validity is not just based on empirical evidence or reliable sources, but also on arguments, and Blair uses these extensively – but hardly without the usual fallacies.

Thus, although he recognizes the difference with the pre-war appeasement in the 1930s (no nations are at war now), he does use the appeasement argument anyhow (e.g., by citing a newspaper article of the 1930s by way of comparison), and then says:

- (19) Each time is different and the present must be judged without the benefit of hindsight. So let me explain to the House why I believe that the threat that we face today is so serious and why we must tackle it.

This passage is followed by the rhetorical “I know” passage cited above (2) about Blair’s knowledge about countries and groups involved in the proliferation of WMDs as well as about international terrorism – and their assumed but relationship. The implicit argument is then that appeasement then – facing another dictator – led to a World War, and the same might happen if we continue to appease Saddam Hussein. Similarly, he also uses the argument so often used by Bush:

- (20) The key today is stability and order. The threat is chaos and disorder – and there are two begetters of chaos: tyrannical regimes with weapons of mass destruction and extreme terrorist groups who profess a perverted and false view of Islam. (...)

Those two threats have, of course, different motives and different origins, but they share one basic common view: they detest the freedom, democracy and tolerance that are the hallmarks of our way of life.

This is a crucial passage, and in fact one of the major reasons – after the attacks of September 11 – formulated to go war, the fundamental bipolar construct of *Them* being violent and non-democratic, and *Us* as being peaceful and democratic, a clash of interests that can only be avoided by a preventive war to combat the threat. For such an ideological, bipolar construction of the worst possibly enemy of our “stable” democracies, no further evidence is necessary, because the argument that legitimizes the impending war is based on the very definition of the enemy. In other words, the fallacy of the central argument is that although it might be granted that *They* are ‘evil’, and in a sense also a threat to us, it does not

follow that we should therefore invade Iraq, and even less when the link between WMDs and terrorism has not been established, and less so in Iraq.

Another argument repeated in this speech is that if ‘we’ do not act now, this will be a terrible precedent:

- (21) What will Saddam feel? He will feel strengthened beyond measure. What will the other states that tyrannise their people, the terrorists who threaten our existence, take from that? They will take it that the will confronting them is decaying and feeble.

Whereas the first fallacy (the comparison with 1930s appeasement) is about the past, this one is about the future, about the purported consequences of ‘our’ failure to act – a speculation on the possible future reasoning of Saddam Hussein or even “other states that tyrannise their people”. Such an argument would hold only if it were true that punishment of one criminal will generally prevent others from committing crimes – something that neither in law enforcement nor in international politics seems to be the case – but only an element of lay psychology on the prevention of crime or negative actions.

Opponents of Blair could use even more powerful arguments of comparison by referring to the long list of international interventions and invasions – even those legitimated by the United Nations – that either did not change the culprit, as is the case of the Gulf War, or that had fatal international consequences: Vietnam’s occupation by the US, Afghanistan’s occupation by the Russians, and so on.

Obviously, Blair does not even hint at such possible counterarguments. He only occasionally admits the possible validity of a counterargument, for instance that the link between terrorism and WMDs is tenuous, and that Iraq is not “the only part of this threat”.

From another perspective the main argument of Blair, as also his lexical choice suggests, is to show resolve, not to be weak, and other criteria that might be summarized in terms of macho-politics. Here is the crucial passage that summarizes what for Blair is worse than anything: show weakness and ‘just talk’:

- (22) Faced with it [the threat of Iraq], the world should unite. The UN should be the focus both of diplomacy and of action. That is what 1441 said. That was the deal. And I simply say to the House that to break it now, and to will the ends but not the means, would do more damage in the long term to the UN than any other single course that we could pursue. To fall back into the lassitude of the past 12 years; to talk, to discuss, to debate but never to act; to declare our will but not to enforce it; and to continue with strong language but with weak intentions – that is the worst course imaginable.

This is the well-known ‘toughness’ argument that is used to meet many social and political problems, and ‘not being tough’ in such cases is seen as the worst character trait – by masculine values – politicians may have, as is also the case for not being tough, to be ‘lax’ on immigration or crime. In fact, these domains (immigration, terrorism, crime) are related not only in terms of the macho language of being tough against it, but also in many other aspects of policy, argumentation and political attitudes. In addition, Saddam Hussein is an Arab, and the real terrorists are both Arabs and Muslim fanatics, and especially since September 11 (but already much earlier), immigration, Islamism and terrorism were closely associated.

It is within this general social representation of the Other that it is easy for Tony Blair to presuppose throughout his speech the evil nature of the prototypical Arab tyrant, and to combine that image with equally prototypical Muslim violence and the age-old threat of the Western world. Of course, such general stereotypes need occasional forms of proof of the really ‘evil’ nature of the protagonists, and SH provided that both by oppressing his people and by invading Kuwait, a Western ally, and Muslim terrorists by the attacks of September 11, that is, against ‘America’. But aggression, violence, abuses of human rights or occupation, as such, are seldom sufficient reasons of international action when not combined with profound ideologically structured attitudes about *Us* and *Them*. This is why Israel is not attacked because of its occupation of parts of Palestine, its possession of WMDs or its human rights abuses, and why Pinochet’s tyranny was aided (or at least not ended) in Chile – nor that of many other dictators in other countries. Fundamental political and economic interests (especially oil, etc.) may be crucial arguments for international invasions, but the fundamental *emotional* word and argument of *threat*, repeated 21 times in Blair’s speech, is especially effective when it is combined with racist ideologies about evil Arabs and fundamentalist Muslims.

6. Conclusions

Knowledge is one of the fundamental notions that also need to be made explicit in a theory of discourse. Research in psychology has shown that language users cannot possibly produce and understand discourse without a vast amount of world knowledge. At the same time, knowledge itself is produced and especially reproduced through discourse. Such knowledge has both cognitive and social dimensions, first as a form of shared and distributed mental representation, and second because of its acquisition, uses and changes in communicative contexts, as well as its unequal distribution in society. That is, access to knowledge and discourse is a fundamental power resource.

In this paper I examined in some more detail how knowledge management is crucial in discourse production and how speakers and writers may strategically express (or suppress) knowledge in a way that may in turn manipulate the knowledge and attitudes of the recipients.

After a brief summary of my multidisciplinary theory of knowledge as justified, shared beliefs of an epistemic community (and hence relative to communities and their knowledge criteria), and its many relations to discourse, it was shown how contextually based epistemic strategies control text and talk at all levels, such as that of topics, local meanings, speech acts and interaction and rhetoric. For each of these discursive expressions of overall epistemic strategies (such as those of asserting new or presupposing and recalling old knowledge) it was demonstrated how such structures may influence the mental models that are the basis of comprehension, and the starting point of general knowledge formation and manipulation.

Finally, in an 'epistemic' analysis of Tony Blair's Iraq speech in March 2003, I showed how many of these discursive manifestations of epistemic strategies may be used in forms of political persuasion and manipulation, for instance by presenting beliefs and speculative and stereotypical presuppositions as knowledge-like convictions, or by a biased use of evidentials (e.g., discourse of expert sources) and argumentative fallacies.

The Iraq speech thus has as its fundamental aim to turn suspicion and speculation, that is, 'mere belief', into the 'true belief' of imagined facts of an imminent 'threat', and into the ideological 'true belief' in the evil and aggressive nature of the currently dominant enemy and stereotypical Other: the Arab and Muslim terrorist.

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Appendix

Speech Tony Blair, UK Commons, March 13, 2003 (according to Hansard)

The Prime Minister (Mr. Tony Blair): I beg to move,

That this House notes its decisions of 25th November 2002 and 26th February 2003 to endorse UN Security Council Resolution 1441; recognises that Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and long range missiles, and its continuing non-compliance with Security Council Resolutions, pose a threat to international peace and security; notes that in the 130 days since Resolution 1441 was adopted Iraq has not co-operated actively, unconditionally and immediately with the weapons inspectors, and has rejected the final opportunity to comply and is in further material breach of its obligations under successive mandatory UN Security Council Resolutions; regrets that despite sustained diplomatic effort by Her Majesty's Gov-

ernment it has not proved possible to secure a second Resolution in the UN because one Permanent Member of the Security Council made plain in public its intention to use its veto whatever the circumstances; notes the opinion of the Attorney General that, Iraq having failed to comply and Iraq being at the time of Resolution 1441 and continuing to be in material breach, the authority to use force under Resolution 678 has revived and so continues today; believes that the United Kingdom must uphold the authority of the United Nations as set out in Resolution 1441 and many Resolutions preceding it, and therefore supports the decision of Her Majesty's Government that the United Kingdom should use all means necessary to ensure the disarmament of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction; offers wholehearted support to the men and women of Her Majesty's Armed Forces now on duty in the Middle East; in the event of military operations requires that, on

an urgent basis, the United Kingdom should seek a new Security Council Resolution that would affirm Iraq's territorial integrity, ensure rapid delivery of humanitarian relief, allow for the earliest possible lifting of UN sanctions, an international reconstruction programme, and the use of all oil revenues for the benefit of the Iraqi people and endorse an appropriate post-conflict administration for Iraq, leading to a representative government which upholds human rights and the rule of law for all Iraqis; and also welcomes the imminent publication of the Quartet's roadmap as a significant step to bringing a just and lasting peace settlement between Israelis and Palestinians and for the wider Middle East region, and endorses the role of Her Majesty's Government in actively working for peace between Israel and Palestine.

At the outset, I say that it is right that the House debate this issue and pass judgment. That is the democracy that is our right, but that others struggle for in vain. Again, I say that I do not disrespect the views in opposition to mine. This is a tough choice indeed, but it is also a stark one: to stand British troops down now and turn back, or to hold firm to the course that we have set. I believe passionately that we must hold firm to that course. The question most often posed is not "Why does it matter?" but "Why does it matter so much?" Here we are, the Government, with their most serious test, their majority at risk, the first Cabinet resignation over an issue of policy, the main parties internally divided, {761} people who agree on everything else?

[Hon. Members: "The main parties?"]

Ah, yes, of course. The Liberal Democrats – unified, as ever, in opportunism and error.

[Interruption.]

The country and the Parliament reflect each other. This is a debate that, as time has gone on, has become less bitter but no less grave. So why does it matter so much? Because the outcome of this issue will now determine more than the fate of the Iraqi regime and more than

the future of the Iraqi people who have been brutalised by Saddam for so long, important though those issues are. It will determine the way in which Britain and the world confront the central security threat of the 21st century, the development of the United Nations, the relationship between Europe and the United States, the relations within the European Union and the way in which the United States engages with the rest of the world. So it could hardly be more important. It will determine the pattern of international politics for the next generation.

First, let us recap the history of Iraq and weapons of mass destruction. In April 1991, after the Gulf war, Iraq was given 15 days to provide a full and final declaration of all its weapons of mass destruction. Saddam had used the weapons against Iran and against his own people, causing thousands of deaths. He had had plans to use them against allied forces. It became clear, after the Gulf war, that Iraq's WMD ambitions were far more extensive than had hitherto been thought. So the issue was identified by the United Nations at that time as one for urgent remedy. UNSCOM, the weapons inspection team, was set up. It was expected to complete its task, following the declaration, at the end of April 1991. The declaration, when it came, was false: a blanket denial of the programme, other than in a very tentative form. And so the 12-year game began.

The inspectors probed. Finally, in March 1992, Iraq admitted that it had previously undeclared weapons of mass destruction, but it said that it had destroyed them. It gave another full and final declaration. Again the inspectors probed. In October 1994, Iraq stopped co-operating with the weapons inspectors altogether. Military action was threatened. Inspections resumed. In March 1996, in an effort to rid Iraq of the inspectors, a further full and final declaration of WMD was made. By July 1996, however, Iraq was forced to admit that declaration, too, was false.

In August, it provided yet another full and final declaration. Then, a week later, Saddam's son-in-law, Hussein Kamal, defected to Jordan. He disclosed a far more extensive biological weapons programme and, for the first time, said that Iraq had weaponised the programme – something that Saddam had always strenuously denied. All this had been happening while the inspectors were in Iraq.

Kamal also revealed Iraq's crash programme to produce a nuclear weapon in the 1990s. Iraq was then forced to release documents that showed just how extensive those programmes were. In November 1996, Jordan intercepted prohibited components for missiles {762} that could be used for weapons of mass destruction. Then a further "full and final declaration" was made. That, too, turned out to be false.

In June 1997, inspectors were barred from specific sites. In September 1997, lo and behold, yet another "full and final declaration" was made – also false. Meanwhile, the inspectors discovered VX nerve agent production equipment, the existence of which had always been denied by the Iraqis.

In October 1997, the United States and the United Kingdom threatened military action if Iraq refused to comply with the inspectors. Finally, under threat of action in February 1998, Kofi Annan went to Baghdad and negotiated a memorandum with Saddam to allow inspections to continue. They did continue, for a few months. In August, co-operation was suspended.

In December, the inspectors left. Their final report is a withering indictment of Saddam's lies, deception and obstruction, with large quantities of weapons of mass destruction unaccounted for. Then, in December 1998, the US and the UK undertook Desert Fox, a targeted bombing campaign to degrade as much of the Iraqi WMD facility as we could.

In 1999, a new inspection team, UNMOVIC, was set up. Saddam refused to allow those

inspectors even to enter Iraq. So there they stayed, in limbo, until, after resolution 1441 last November, they were allowed to return.

That is the history – and what is the claim of Saddam today? Why, exactly the same as before: that he has no weapons of mass destruction. Indeed, we are asked to believe that after seven years of obstruction and non-compliance, finally resulting in the inspectors' leaving in 1998 – seven years in which he hid his programme and built it up, even when the inspectors were there in Iraq – when they had left, he voluntarily decided to do what he had consistently refused to do under coercion.

When the inspectors left in 1998, they left unaccounted for 10,000 litres of anthrax; a far-reaching VX nerve agent programme; up to 6,500 chemical munitions; at least 80 tonnes of mustard gas, and possibly more than 10 times that amount; unquantifiable amounts of sarin, botulinum toxin and a host of other biological poisons; and an entire Scud missile programme. We are asked now seriously to accept that in the last few years – contrary to all history, contrary to all intelligence – Saddam decided unilaterally to destroy those weapons. I say that such a claim is palpably absurd.

Resolution 1441 is very clear. It lays down a final opportunity for Saddam to disarm. It rehearses the fact that he has for years been in material breach of 17 UN resolutions. It says that this time compliance must be full, unconditional and immediate, the first step being a full and final declaration of all weapons of mass destruction to be given on 8 December last year.

I will not go through all the events since then, as the House is familiar with them, but this much is accepted by all members of the UN Security Council: the 8 December declaration is false. That in itself, incidentally, is a material breach. Iraq has taken some steps in co-operation, but no one disputes that it is not {763} fully co-operating. Iraq continues to

deny that it has any weapons of mass destruction, although no serious intelligence service anywhere in the world believes it.

On 7 March, the inspectors published a remarkable document. It is 173 pages long, and details all the unanswered questions about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. It lists 29 different areas in which the inspectors have been unable to obtain information. On VX, for example, it says:

"Documentation available to UNMOVIC suggests that Iraq at least had had far reaching plans to weaponise VX".

On mustard gas, it says:

"Mustard constituted an important part ... of Iraq's CW arsenal ... 550 mustard filled shells and up to 450 mustard filled aerial bombs unaccounted for ... additional uncertainty" with respect to over 6,500 aerial bombs, "corresponding to approximately 1,000 tonnes of agent, predominantly mustard."

On biological weapons, the inspectors' report states:

"Based on unaccounted for growth media, Iraq's potential production of anthrax could have been in the range of about 15,000 to 25,000 litres ... Based on all the available evidence, the strong presumption is that about 10,000 litres of anthrax was not destroyed and may still exist."

On that basis, I simply say to the House that, had we meant what we said in resolution 1441, the Security Council should have convened and condemned Iraq as in material breach. What is perfectly clear is that Saddam is playing the same old games in the same old way. Yes, there are minor concessions, but there has been no fundamental change of heart or mind.

However, after 7 March, the inspectors said that there was at least some co-operation, and the world rightly hesitated over war. Let me now describe to the House what then took place.

We therefore approached a second resolution in this way. As I said, we could have asked for the second resolution then and there, because it was justified. Instead, we laid down an ultimatum calling upon Saddam to come into line with resolution 1441, or be in material breach. That is not an unreasonable proposition, given the history, but still countries hesitated. They asked, "How do we judge what is full co-operation?"

So we then worked on a further compromise. We consulted the inspectors and drew up five tests, based on the document that they published on 7 March. Those tests included allowing interviews with 30 scientists to be held outside Iraq, and releasing details of the production of the anthrax, or at least of the documentation showing what had happened to it. The inspectors added another test: that Saddam should publicly call on Iraqis to co-operate with them.

So we constructed this framework: that Saddam should be given a specified time to fulfil all six tests to show full co-operation; and that, if he did so, the inspectors could then set out a forward work programme that would extend over a period of time to make sure that disarmament happened. However, if Saddam failed to meet those tests to judge compliance, action would follow.

So there were clear benchmarks, plus a clear ultimatum. Again, I defy anyone to describe that as an unreasonable proposition. {764} Last Monday, we were getting very close with it. We very nearly had the majority agreement. If I might, I should particularly like to thank the President of Chile for the constructive way in which he approached this issue.

Yes, there were debates about the length of the ultimatum, but the basic construct was gathering support. Then, on Monday night, France said that it would veto a second resolution, whatever the circumstances. Then France denounced the six tests. Later that day,

Iraq rejected them. Still, we continued to negotiate, even at that point.

Last Friday, France said that it could not accept any resolution with an ultimatum in it. On Monday, we made final efforts to secure agreement. However, the fact is that France remains utterly opposed to anything that lays down an ultimatum authorising action in the event of non-compliance by Saddam.

(...)

The Prime Minister: Of course I agree with my hon. Friend. The House should just consider the position that we were asked to adopt. Those on the Security Council opposed to us say that they want Saddam to disarm, but they will not countenance any new resolution that authorises force in the event of non-compliance. That is their position – no to any ultimatum and no to any resolution that stipulates that failure to comply will lead to military action. So we must demand that Saddam disarms, but relinquish any concept of a threat if he does not.

From December 1998 to December 2002, no UN inspector was allowed to inspect anything in Iraq. For four years, no inspection took place. What changed Saddam's mind was the threat of force. From December to January, and then from January through to February, some concessions were made. What changed his mind? It was the threat of force. What makes him now issue invitations to the inspectors, discover documents that he said he never had, produce evidence of weapons supposed to be non-existent, and destroy missiles he said he would keep? It is the imminence of force. The only persuasive power to which he responds is 250,000 allied troops on his doorstep. However, when that fact is so obvious, we are told that any resolution that authorises force in the event of non-compliance will be vetoed – not just opposed, but vetoed and blocked.

(...)

The Prime Minister: For the very reason that I have just given. If a member of the permanent five indicates to members of the Security Council who are not permanent members that whatever the circumstances it will veto, that is the way to block any progress on the Security Council.

[Interruption.]

With the greatest respect to whoever shouted out that the presence of the troops is working, I agree, but it is British and American troops who are there, not French troops.

The tragedy is that had such a resolution ensued and had the UN come together and united – and if other troops had gone there, not just British and American troops – Saddam Hussein might have complied. But the moment we proposed the benchmarks and canvassed support for an ultimatum, there was an immediate recourse to the language of the veto. The choice was not action now or postponement of action; the choice was action or no action at all.

(...)

The Prime Minister: We can argue about each one of those vetoes in the past and whether they were reasonable, but I define an unreasonable veto as follows. In resolution 1441, we said that it was Saddam's final opportunity and that he had to comply. That was agreed by all members of the Security Council. What is surely unreasonable is for a country to come forward now, at the very point when we might reach agreement and when we are – not unreasonably – saying that he must comply with the UN, after all these months without full compliance, on the basis of the six tests or action will follow. For that country to say that it will veto such a resolution in all circumstances is what I would call unreasonable.

The tragedy is that the world has to learn the lesson all over again that weakness in the face of a threat from a tyrant is the surest way not to peace, but – unfortunately – to conflict.

Looking back over those 12 years, the truth is that we have been victims of our own desire to placate the implacable, to persuade towards reason the utterly unreasonable, and to hope that there was some genuine intent to do good in a regime whose mind is in fact evil.

Now the very length of time counts against us. People say, "You've waited 12 years, so why not wait a little longer?" Of course we have done so, because resolution 1441 gave a final opportunity. As I have just pointed out, the first test was on 8 December. But still we waited. We waited for the inspectors' reports. We waited as each concession was tossed to us to whet our appetite for {766} hope and further waiting. But still no one, not even today at the Security Council, says that Saddam is co-operating fully, unconditionally or immediately.

(...)

The Prime Minister: We could have had more time if the compromise proposal that we put forward had been accepted. I take it from what the hon. Gentleman has just said that he would accept that the compromise proposal we put forward was indeed reasonable. We set out the tests. If Saddam meets those tests, we extend the work programme of the inspectors. If he does not meet those tests, we take action. I think that the hon. Gentleman would also agree that unless the threat of action was made, it was unlikely that Saddam would meet the tests.

Simon Hughes / indicated assent./

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman nods his head, but the problem with the diplomacy was that it came to an end after the position of France was made public – and repeated in a private conversation – and it said that it would block, by veto, any resolution that contained an ultimatum. We could carry on discussing it for a long time, but the French were not prepared to change their position. I am not prepared to carry on waiting and delaying, with our troops in place in difficult

circumstances, when that country has made it clear that it has a fixed position and will not change. I would have hoped that, rather than condemn us for not waiting even longer, the hon. Gentleman would condemn those who laid down the veto.

(...)

The Prime Minister: I truly believe that our fault has not been impatience. The truth is that our patience should have been exhausted weeks and months and even years ago.

(...)

The Prime Minister : First, the hon. Gentleman is absolutely wrong about the position on resolution 1441. It is correct that resolution 1441 did not say that there would be another resolution authorising the use of force, but the implication of resolution 1441 – it was stated in terms – was that if Iraq continued in material breach, defined as not co-operating fully, immediately and unconditionally, serious consequences should follow. All we are asking for in the second resolution is the clear ultimatum that if Saddam continues to fail to co-operate, force should be used. The French position is that France will vote no, whatever the circumstances. Those are not my words, but those of the French President. I find it sad that at this point in time he cannot support us in the position we have set out, which is the only sure way to disarm Saddam. And what, indeed, would any tyrannical regime possessing weapons of mass destruction think when viewing the history of the world's diplomatic dance with Saddam over these 12 years? That our capacity to pass firm resolutions has only been matched by our feebleness in implementing them. That is why this indulgence has to stop – because it is dangerous: dangerous if such regimes disbelieve us; dangerous if they think they can use our weakness, our hesitation, and even the natural urges of our democracy towards peace against us; and dangerous because one day they will mistake our innate revulsion against war for permanent

incapacity, when, in fact, if pushed to the limit, we will act. But when we act, after years of pretence, the action will have to be harder, bigger, more total in its impact. It is true that Iraq is not the only country with weapons of mass destruction, but I say this to the House: back away from this confrontation now, and future conflicts will be infinitely worse and more devastating in their effects.

Of course, in a sense, any fair observer does not really dispute that Iraq is in breach of resolution 1441 or that it implies action in such circumstances. The real problem is that, underneath, people dispute that Iraq is a threat, dispute the link between terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, and dispute, in other words, the whole basis of our assertion that the two together constitute a fundamental assault on our way of life.

There are glib and sometimes foolish comparisons with the 1930s. I am not suggesting for a moment that anyone here is an appeaser or does not share our revulsion at the regime of Saddam. However, there is one relevant point of analogy. It is that, with history, we know what happened. We can look back and say, "There's the time; that was the moment; that's when we should have acted." However, the point is that it was not clear at the time – not at that moment. In fact, at that time, many people thought such a fear fanciful or, worse, that it was put forward in bad faith by warmongers. Let me read one thing from an editorial from a paper that I am pleased to say takes a different {768} position today. It was written in late 1938 after Munich. One would have thought from the history books that people thought the world was tumultuous in its desire to act. This is what the editorial said:

"Be glad in your hearts. Give thanks to your God. People of Britain, your children are safe. Your husbands and your sons will not march to war. Peace is a victory for all mankind ... And now let us go back to our own affairs. We have had enough of those menaces, conjured up ... to confuse us."

Now, of course, should Hitler again appear in the same form, we would know what to do. But the point is that history does not declare the future to us plainly. Each time is different and the present must be judged without the benefit of hindsight. So let me explain to the House why I believe that the threat that we face today is so serious and why we must tackle it. The threat today is not that of the 1930s. It is not big powers going to war with each other. The ravages that fundamentalist ideology inflicted on the 20th century are memories. The cold war is over. Europe is at peace, if not always diplomatically. But the world is ever more interdependent. Stock markets and economies rise and fall together, confidence is the key to prosperity, and insecurity spreads like contagion. The key today is stability and order. The threat is chaos and disorder – and there are two begetters of chaos: tyrannical regimes with weapons of mass destruction and extreme terrorist groups who profess a perverted and false view of Islam.

Let me tell the House what I know. I know that there are some countries, or groups within countries, that are proliferating and trading in weapons of mass destruction – especially nuclear weapons technology. I know that there are companies, individuals, and some former scientists on nuclear weapons programmes, who are selling their equipment or expertise. I know that there are several countries – mostly dictatorships with highly repressive regimes – that are desperately trying to acquire chemical weapons, biological weapons or, in particular, nuclear weapons capability. Some of those countries are now a short time away from having a serviceable nuclear weapon. This activity is not diminishing. It is increasing.

We all know that there are terrorist groups now operating in most major countries. Just in the past two years, around 20 different nations have suffered serious terrorist outrages. Thousands of people – quite apart from 11 September – have died in them. The purpose

of that terrorism is not just in the violent act; it is in producing terror. It sets out to inflame, to divide, and to produce consequences of a calamitous nature. Round the world, it now poisons the chances of political progress – in the middle east, in Kashmir, in Chechnya and in Africa. The removal of the Taliban – yes – dealt it a blow. But it has not gone away.

Those two threats have, of course, different motives and different origins, but they share one basic common view: they detest the freedom, democracy and tolerance that are the hallmarks of our way of life. At the moment, I accept fully that the association between the two is loose – but it is hardening. The possibility of the two coming together – of terrorist groups in possession of weapons of mass destruction or even of a so-called dirty radiological bomb – is now, in my judgment, a real and present danger to Britain and its national security.

(...)

The Prime Minister: Let me deal with this point first. Let us recall: what was shocking about 11 September was not just the slaughter of innocent people but the knowledge that, had the terrorists been able, there would have been not 3,000 innocent dead, but 30,000 or 300,000 – and the more the suffering, the greater their rejoicing. I say to my hon. Friend that America did not attack the al-Qaeda terrorist group; the al-Qaeda terrorist group attacked America. They did not need to be recruited; they were there already. Unless we take action against them, they will grow. That is why we should act.

(...)

The Prime Minister: Just give me a moment and then I will give way.

Let me explain the dangers. Three kilograms of VX from a rocket launcher would contaminate 0.25 sq km of a city. Millions of lethal doses are contained in one litre of anthrax, and 10,000 litres are unaccounted for. What

happened on 11 September has changed the psychology of America – that is clear – but it should have changed the psychology of the world.

Of course, Iraq is not the only part of this threat. I have never said that it was. But it is the test of whether we treat the threat seriously. Faced with it, the world should unite. The UN should be the focus both of diplomacy and of action. That is what 1441 said. That was the deal. And I simply say to the House that to break it now, and to will the ends but not the means, would do more damage in the long term to the UN than any other single course that we could pursue. To fall back into the lassitude of the past 12 years; to talk, to discuss, to debate but never to act; to declare our will but not to enforce it; and to continue with strong language but with weak intentions – that is the worst course imaginable. If we pursue that course, when the threat {770} returns, from Iraq or elsewhere, who will then believe us? What price our credibility with the next tyrant? It was interesting today that some of the strongest statements of support for allied forces came from near to North Korea – from Japan and South Korea.

(...)

The Prime Minister: First, let me apologise to the hon. Member for Rochford and Southend, East (Sir Teddy Taylor. He was making a point in my favour and I failed to spot it.

Secondly, to my hon. Friend, yes, I do support what the President said. Do not be in any doubt at all – Iraq has been supporting terrorist groups. For example, Iraq is offering money to the families of suicide bombers whose purpose is to wreck any chance of progress in the middle east. Although I said that the associations were loose, they are hardening. I do believe that, and I believe that the two threats coming together are the dangers that we face in our world.

I also say this: there will be in any event no sound future for the United Nations – no

guarantee against the repetition of these events – unless we recognise the urgent need for a political agenda that we can unite upon. What we have witnessed is indeed the consequence of Europe and the United States dividing from each other. Not all of Europe – Spain, Italy, Holland, Denmark and Portugal have strongly supported us – and not a majority of Europe if we include, as we should, Europe’s new members who will accede next year, all 10 of whom have been in strong support of the position of this Government. But the paralysis of the UN has been born out of the division that there is.

I want to deal with that in this way. At the heart of that division is the concept of a world in which there are rival poles of power, with the US and its allies in one corner and France, Germany, Russia and their allies in the other. I do not believe that all those nations intend such an outcome, but that is what now faces us. I believe such a vision to be misguided and profoundly dangerous for our world. I know why it arises. There is resentment of US predominance. There is fear of US unilateralism. People ask, “Do the US listen to us and our preoccupations?” And there is perhaps a lack of full understanding of US preoccupations after 11 September. I know all this. But the way to deal with it is {771} not rivalry, but partnership. Partners are not servants, but neither are they rivals. What Europe should have said last September to the United States is this: with one voice it should have said, “We understand your strategic anxiety over terrorism and weapons of mass destruction and we will help you meet it. We will mean what we say in any UN resolution we pass and will back it with action if Saddam fails to disarm voluntarily. However, in return?” Europe should have said?” we ask two things of you: that the US should indeed choose the UN path and you should recognise the fundamental overriding importance of restarting the middle east peace process, which we will hold you to.”

That would have been the right and responsible way for Europe and America to treat each other as partners, and it is a tragedy that it has not happened. I do not believe that there is any other issue with the same power to reunite the world community than progress on the issues of Israel and Palestine. Of course, there is cynicism about recent announcements, but the United States is now committed – and, I believe genuinely – to the road map for peace designed in consultation with the UN. It will now be presented to the parties as Abu Mazen is confirmed in office, hopefully today, as Palestinian Prime Minister. All of us are now signed up to this vision: a state of Israel, recognised and accepted by all the world, and a viable Palestinian state. That is what this country should strive for, and we will.

And that should be part of a larger global agenda: on poverty and sustainable development; on democracy and human rights; and on the good governance of nations.

That is why what happens after any conflict in Iraq is of such critical significance. Here again there is a chance to unify around the United Nations. There should be a new United Nations resolution following any conflict providing not only for humanitarian help, but for the administration and governance of Iraq. That must be done under proper UN authorisation.

(...)

The Prime Minister: I shall certainly do so. The UN resolution that should provide for the proper governance of Iraq should also protect totally the territorial integrity of Iraq. And this point is also important: that the oil revenues, which people falsely claim that we want to seize, should be put in a trust fund for the Iraqi people administered through the UN.

(...)

The Prime Minister: In a moment. {772} Let the future Government of Iraq be given the chance to begin the process of uniting the

nation's disparate groups, on a democratic basis?

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: If my hon. Friend will allow me to continue for a moment, I shall come back to him.

The process must begin on a democratic basis, respecting human rights, as, indeed, the fledgling democracy in northern Iraq – protected from Saddam for 12 years by British and American pilots in the no-fly zone – has done remarkably. The moment that a new Government are in place, committed to disarming Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, is the point in time when sanctions should be lifted, and can be lifted, in their entirety for the people of Iraq.

(...)

The Prime Minister: Turkey has given that commitment. I have spoken to the Turkish Government, as have the President of the United States and many others. I have to say to my hon. Friend that it is clear from the conversations that I have had with people in that Kurdish autonomous zone that what they really fear above all else is the prospect of Saddam remaining in power, emboldened because we have failed to remove him.

I have never put the justification for action as regime change. We have to act within the terms set out in resolution 1441 – that is our legal base. But it is the reason why I say frankly that if we do act, we should do so with a clear conscience and a strong heart. I accept fully that those who are opposed to this course of action share my detestation of Saddam. Who could not? Iraq is a potentially wealthy country which in 1979, the year before Saddam came to power, was richer than Portugal or Malaysia. Today it is impoverished, with 60 per cent. of its population dependent on food aid. Thousands of children die needlessly every year from lack of food and medicine. Four

million people out of a population of just over 20 million are living in exile.

The brutality of the repression – the death and torture camps, the barbaric prisons for political opponents, the routine beatings for anyone or their families suspected of disloyalty – is well documented. Just last week, someone slandering Saddam was tied to a lamp post in a street in Baghdad, their tongue was cut out, and they were mutilated and left to bleed to death as a warning to others. I recall a few weeks ago talking to an Iraqi exile and saying to her that I understood how grim it must be under the lash of Saddam. “But you don’t”, she replied. “You cannot. You do not know what it is like to live in perpetual fear.” And she is right. We take our freedom for granted. But imagine what it must be like not to be able to speak or discuss or debate or even question the society you live in. To see friends and family taken away and never daring to complain. To suffer the humility of failing courage in face of pitiless terror. That is how the Iraqi people live. Leave Saddam in place, and the blunt truth is that that is how they will continue to be forced to live.

We must face the consequences of the actions that we advocate. For those of us who support the course that I am advocating, that means all the dangers of war. But for others who are opposed to this course, it means – let us be clear – that for the Iraqi people, whose only true hope lies in the removal of Saddam, the darkness will simply close back over. They will be left under his rule, without any possibility of liberation – not from us, not from anyone.

(..)

The Prime Minister: In a moment. This is the choice before us. If this House now demands that at this moment, faced with this threat from this regime, British troops are pulled back, that we turn away at the point of reckoning – this is what it means – what then? What will Saddam feel? He will feel strengthened beyond measure. What will the other states

that tyrannise their people, the terrorists who threaten our existence, take from that? They will take it that the will confronting them is decaying and feeble. Who will celebrate and who will weep if we take our troops back from the Gulf now?

Glenda Jackson: Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: I am sorry. If our plea is for America to work with others, to be good as well as powerful allies, will our retreat make it multilateralist, or will it not rather be the biggest impulse to unilateralism that we could possibly imagine? What then of the United Nations, and of the future of Iraq and the middle east peace process, devoid of our influence and stripped of our insistence?

The House wanted this discussion before conflict. That was a legitimate demand. It has it, and these are the choices. In this dilemma, no choice is perfect, no choice is ideal, but on this decision hangs the fate of many things: of whether we summon the strength to recognise the global challenge of the 21st century, and meet it; of the Iraqi people, groaning

under years of dictatorship; of our armed forces, brave men and women of whom we can feel proud, and whose morale is high and whose purpose is clear; of the institutions and alliances that will shape our world for years to come. To retreat now, I believe, would put at hazard all that we hold dearest. To turn the United Nations back into a talking shop; to stifle the first steps of progress in the middle east; to leave the Iraqi people to the mercy of events over which we would have relinquished all power to influence for the better; to tell our allies that at the very moment of action, at the very moment when they need our determination, Britain faltered: I will not be party to such a course.

This is not the time to falter. This is the time not just for this Government – or, indeed, for this Prime Minister – but for this House to give a lead: to show that {774} we will stand up for what we know to be right; to show that we will confront the tyrannies and dictatorships and terrorists who put our way of life at risk; to show, at the moment of decision, that we have the courage to do the right thing.