THE DISCOURSE OF GLOBALIZATION IN POLITICS – CREATING INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE OR REPOSITIONING CULTURAL IDENTITIES?

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Abstract: Globalization and its discourse have affected almost all fields of interest starting with economics, politics, culture, social development, etc., and ending with education and day-to-day life and activities. The need for an intercultural dialogue has become more poignant than ever and the interest in intercultural dialogue research has grown concurrently. Late global events related to violence, conflict and war have shown a need to regard intercultural dialogue from a different perspective. The present paper endeavours to show in what way the discourse of globalization in modern politics has attempted to create a type of intercultural dialogue that would legitimize certain social changes and decisions within national and cultural identities.

Key words: discourse, globalization, political discourse, social change

The subject of globalization has been largely debated in numerous previous studies.We shall choose, in what follows, to look at the relationship between globalization and discourse, at the modes and perspective of interpreting globalization in stances of political discourse.

Agreeing that, apart from its economic, political, cultural, technological, and ecological dimensions, globalization contains

'important *discursive* aspects in the form of ideologically charged narratives that put before the public a particular agenda of topics for discussion, questions to ask and claims to make. The existence of these narratives shows that globalization is not merely an objective process, but also a plethora of stories that define, describe, and analyse that very process. The social forces behind these competing accounts of globalization seek to endow this relatively new buzzword with norms, values, and meanings that not only legitimate and advance specific power interests, but also shape the personal the collective identities of billions of people. In order to shed light on these rhetorical manoeuvres, any introduction to globalization ought to examine its ideological dimension.' [1],

Manfred Steger accepts the importance of the discourse of globalization, the importance of language in the relations that are being established between the phenomenon of globalization and all the important aspects that make a society what it is. In relating to globalization as a 'contested concept', Steger starts his account by making a connection with the events of September 11, by recalling how during a lecture he was holding shortly after the attacks, a student failed to understand the connection 'between the violent forces of religious fundamentalism and the more secular picture of a technologically sophisticated, rapidly globalizing world'. For the sake of the punctuality of the case made by the student in question, we will reproduce the exact problem raised as Steger enunciated it at the beginning of his study:

'I understand that "globalization" is a contested process that refers to sometimes contradictory social processes,' a bright history major at the back of the room quipped, 'but

1 Manfred Steger, Globalization: A Very Short Introduction, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p. xi-xii

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how can you say that the TV image of a religious fanatic who denounces modernity and secularism from a mountain cave in Afghanistan perfectly captures the complex dynamics of globalization? Don't these terrible acts of terrorism suggest the opposite, namely, the growth of parochial forces that undermine globalization?' Obviously the student was referring to Saudi-born Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, whose videotaped statement condemning the activities of 'international infidels' had been broadcast worldwide on 7 October. (Steger, 2003: 1)

This question first made Steger realise that the 'story of globalization would remain elusive without real-life examples capable of breathing shape, colour, and sound into a vague concept that had become *the* buzzword of our time.' and second, it pushed him to proceed to a 'deconstruction' of the aforementioned videotape – in a sub chapter entitled 'Deconstructing Osama bin Laden' – in an attempt to 'provide important clues to the nature and dynamics of the phenomenon'. (ibid: 1-2) The respective chapter went on to show how the production and distribution of the tape in question had only been possible with the help of all the modern technology (sophisticated information and telecommunication networks); how the Al-Jazeera TV channel managed within only three years from its inception to be able to broadcast internationally by powerful satellites 'put into orbit by European rockets and American space shuttles'; how 'when the world's attention shifted to the war in Afghanistan, Al-Jazeera had already positioned itself as a truly global player, powerful enough to rent equipment to such prominent news providers as Reuters and ABC, sell satellite time to the Associated Press and BBC, and design an innovative Arabic-language business news channel together with its other American network partner, CNBC.', (ibid: 4); how, finally, 'there can be no doubt that it was the existence of this global chain of global interdependencies and interconnections that made possible the instant broadcast of bin Laden's speech to a global audience.' (ibid: 5) He also shows how even antimodernizers such as bin Laden make use of tools provided by globalization, by wearing, for instance, contemporary military fatigues over traditional Arab garments[2], or owning an AK-47 rifle, or his Timex sports watch ('as American as apple pie' in Steger's words), concluding that a brief deconstruction of such central images leads to a 'real-life example of the intricate – and sometimes contradictory – social dynamics of globalization, ' making it easier for us to try and work on a definition of globalization 'that brings some analytical precision to a contested concept that has proven to be notoriously hard to pin down.' (ibid: 7)

The definition Steger reaches at the end of a historical review of the use of the word and concept of globalization is, how else, but in close connection to the various aspects of life and society and pursuing the dynamics of the phenomenon he mentioned before. He distinguishes a number of questions that scholars studying globalization are pursuing in relation to the theme of 'social change' and eventually underlines how the evolution of the phenomenon is closely linked to the perceptions of time and space. The questions are worth mentioning as they possibly reflect the very way in which globalization should be looked at:

Hence, scholars who explore the dynamics of globalization are particularly keen on pursuing research questions related to the theme of social change. How does globalization occur? What is driving globalization? Is it one cause or a combination of factors? Is globalization a uniform or an uneven process? Is globalization extending modernity or is it a radical break? How does globalization differ from previous social developments? Does

2 'In other words, his dress reflects the contemporary processes of fragmentation and cross-fertilization that globalization scholars call 'hybridization' – the mixing of different cultural forms and styles facilitated by global economic and cultural exchanges.' - Manfred Steger, Globalization: A Very Short Introduction, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 5

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globalization create new forms of inequality and hierarchy? Notice that the conceptualization of globalization as an ongoing process rather than as a static condition forces the researcher to pay close attention to shifting perceptions of time and space. This explains why globalization scholars assign particular significance to historical analysis and the reconfiguration of social space. (Steger, 2003: 8-9)

The way in which major events are constructed in public discourse continues to be a topic of interest among disciplines. The way in which large-scale transformations and changes are experienced is reflected in the collective vocabularies used to describe such changes. The collective vocabularies are constructed through types of literature that yield legitimation and appropriation to the understanding of the events. Without seeing the discourse of globalization as deriving from or determined by economic circumstances, nor adopting the opposite view that idealistically sees discourse as having no connection to the economic life, the approach is one that sees the discourse of/on globalization in close connection to the changes occurring within the process of global integration. At the same time, it conveys a 'tone' that shifts as it is influenced by an interpretation of changes according to certain interests that are being served, interests of diverse discursive actors, positioned within the discourse, as the discourse spreads.

Evidently, there is a clear-cut distinction between globalization as a structural process and globalization as a symbolic discourse, and, while the first aspect has been much more subject to research, the second aspect of globalization as a discursive practice has received lesser attention. The discourse that is most largely affected by globalization is the public discourse, which also comprises political discourse. We also accept that not all actors are evenly affected by globalization in a society. Therefore, we would like to argue that, among those actors that find globalization a particularly coherent or attractive explanation of what is going on, journalists and political figures or political leaders are crucial categories, thus testifying for the diversity of discursive fields that influence or are influenced by the process and phenomenon of globalization.

The increased *interdiscursivity* of the phenomenon as it expands makes it possible for participants in one field to bring in terms from another field. (Fairclough 1992), and as conflict over the definition and construction of social realities steps in, the extent of interdiscursivity and the struggle over the construction of reality are connected: greater interdiscursivity allows agents to challenge existing understandings. (Fairclough 1995) What this diffusion of the discourse of globalization across discursive fields does is to generate more points of view and also allow problems in these discursive fields to attach themselves to “globalization” as a sensemaking term. (Fiss and Hirsch 2005).

As a *process*, globalization presupposes the integration of economic, social, cultural, and political transactions into a single system, rendering old boundaries increasingly irrelevant. As a *discursive practice*, globalization borrows terms from all these economic, social, cultural and political fields and, although it might at times integrate them into one major interdiscursive project and give birth to catch-phrases that seem to become ubiquitously generally valid, it does not, paradoxically, render boundaries irrelevant. On the contrary, it underlines them as conflicts related to defining, defending, or contesting globalization arise. Fields interchanges (trade, investment, finance, communications, media, ideas, education, etc.) and people, all make contributions to the recognition of globalization processes. But the power of globalization as ideology, or discourse is accepted and recognized even by sceptics as Hirst and Thompson (1996) who argue, for instance, that the world economy is only partially and unevenly integrated. Beck (1999), on the other hand, distinguishes between the process of globalization and the ideology of globalism. While globalization is seen as the process that integrates regional economies, societies and cultures

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through a global network of communications, transportation, and trade, globalism is the attitude that describes the process, it is viewing the interests of the entire world above those of individual nations. In his book, *The Rise of the Global Imaginary. Political Ideologies from the French Revolution to the Global War on Terror*, Manfred Steger argues that the novelty of the "new ideologies" (such as feminism, environmentalism, and postcolonialism) is their sensitivity toward the rising global imaginary, and that while at the mid-1990s the new 'buzzword' of "globalization" became the central metaphor for their political agenda, the 'new ideologies' translated the social imaginary into economic global claims: "global" trade, "worldwide" flows of goods, services and labor, "transnational" corporations, "offshore" financial centers, an so on. But, he argues,

> globalization was never merely a matter of increasing flows of capital and goods across national borders. Rather, it constitutes a multidimensional set of processes in which images, sound bites, metaphors, myths, symbols, and spatial arrangements of globality were just as important as economic and technological dynamics. (Steger 2008: 11)

and he puts an emphasis on the heightened awareness of the compression of time and space, reminding of sociologist Roland Robertson's argument that the compression of the world into a single place increasingly makes the global the frame of reference for human thought and action, thus concluding that

> Globalization involves both the macrostructures of community and the microstructures of personhood. It extends deep into the core of the self and its dispositions, facilitating the creation of new identities nurtured by the intensifying relations between the individual and the globe. […]
>
> The ideologies dominating the world today are no longer exclusively articulations of the national imaginary but reconfigured ideational systems that constitute potent translations of the dawning global imaginary. (Steger 2008: 12)

In fact, Steger uses the term 'globalism' to refer to three ideological translators of what he calls the global imaginary, and they are: "market globalism", "justice globalism" and "jihadist globalism". The "market globalism" is, in his view, the ideology that emerged in the 1990s drawing on the virtues of 'globally integrating markets; the "justice globalism" ideology emerges at the end of the Nineties as a challenging alternative translation of the rising global imaginary coming from the part of the political left, while the "jihadist globalism" is, in his view, the right-wing challenge to market globalism. Now, the reason we have mentioned these denominations used by Steger to characterize his rise of the global imaginary is precisely to reach this last one which we consider to be somewhat of a 'wild' choice from the part of the author, but, nevertheless, one that could be accounted for from a certain perspective. What he has in mind when he thinks of "jihadist globalism" is a representation of 'a potent globalism of worldwide appeal' epitomized by the terrorist attacks of 9/11, and which generated the imperial globalism. (Steger 2008: 13) He also explains that his choice for the word 'globalism' on the level of ideology comes out of the 'difficulty of expressing the articulations of the global imaginary in familiar terms.', and he hopes that "globalism" (along with similarly emergent terms like, for instance, "nationalism") will eventually be known by 'terms referring to the various ideological articulations of the global imaginary.' The reason we tend to agree with some of the concepts used by Steger, with his analytical perspective and some of his choices regarding the major events worth analysing is because Steger's aim of his discussion on the global imaginary resembles the aim of our discussion on the discourse of the 'war on terror', which is a better understanding of the

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changing discourse of our time in response to major events, but political and social interests as well, agreeing with Steger that there are multiple levels to get through whenever we try to analyse political, social and cultural appropriations of events.

Today, the national and the global rub up against each other in myriad settings and on multiple levels. Putting the analytic spotlight on the changing ideological landscape not only yields a better understanding of the dominant political belief systems of our time but also helps us make sense of the profound and multidimensional dynamics that go by the name of globalization. (Steger 2003: 15)

If we consider, along with Foucault, that discourses are the conditions of social practices and agencies, and then, along with the German linguists, that discourses are public, planned and organized discussion processes, which refer to topics of public interest and concern (Keller et al., 2001), then we agree that the discourse of globalization is the *sine qua non* condition of the process of globalization as a social practice and as trigger for social changes, as well as the public, planned and organized discussion process whose topic of discussion is of major public interest and concern, due to the major political, social and cultural changes that the world is undergoing. The *discourse fragments* we choose to analyse (which are individual texts belonging to a discourse) usually relate to other texts or fragments in a way that is regulated by the discourse. Discourses are the result of people who are embedded into social and historic contexts, in which knowledge is handed down over generations, written or spoken text is never only individual, but has also social aspects. Consequently, what discourses do is to transport knowledge with which people interpret and shape their environment, and discourses are never the result of one individual, but of all people involved in shaping or structuring the discourse. 'In other words, social reality is produced and made real through discourses, and social interactions cannot be fully understood without reference to the discourses that give them meaning.' (Phillips and Hardy, 2002)

It is what characterizes the discourse of globalization, it is what characterizes a type of political discourse such as, for istance, the discourse of the 'war on terror'. We could, for instance, in order to make a case, draw a parallel between Blair's discourse of the 'war on terror' and Bush's discourse of the 'war on terror' that are strikingly similar here and there. There are two justifications that we could trace in the attempt to account for this *conceptual closeness* between discourse fragments: one justification refers to a real and concrete 'closeness' between the two political leaders, a closeness that the whole world witnessed after the September 11 attacks, a closeness that the media jumped to speculate upon, failing however (and we shall demonstrate that) to trace down and analyse the *conceptual closeness*, that is they failed to follow up on the terms and concepts that both leaders chose to use in their discourse when making references, for instances, to the ones responsible for the attacks, to the world values facing the terrorist threat, to terrorism in general. A few such concepts are 'the new enemy', 'evil', 'good vs. evil', 'threat of the civilised and democratic world' (themselves globalizing terms and concepts), and their frequent reiteration characterizes the two leaders' speeches. Another justification for what we called the 'conceptual closeness' might arise from the aforementioned involvement of the producers of these discursive fragments in the same context (that of the terrorist attacks), from facing the same social reality (the threat of international terrorism) and from sharing the same social values and maybe the same political interests. In our opinion, both justifications may coexist in the formation of discourse.

We shall pursue a short critical and comparative analysis of the way in which the above mentioned leaders and politicians, Tony Blair and George W. Bush, depict the newly

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emerged 'enemy' in a few of their speeches following 9/11. It is interesting to observe the way in which, after the September attacks, the two leaders make themselves a goal out of pointing out to, targeting the 'real' enemy not only of America but of the entire world of today. We will take into consideration the Prime Minister's statement at 10 Downing street from September 25, 2001, President's Bush address to a joint session on Congress from September 20, 2001, Prime Minister's statement on military action in Afghanistan – October 7, 2001, President's Bush address to the nation announcing military action against strategic targets in Afghanistan – October 7, 2001, Prime Minister's statement to parliament on the war on terror – November 14, 2001. Keeping in mind the CDA principles in analysing a type of discourse, we will take into consideration some of them when embarking upon the task of discussing the two leaders' discourse, such as, for instance: the historical context (which, in this case, is obviously self-evident and the trigger for the speeches), the problem-oriented approach, the power relations that are established at the level of discourse, the concept of 'change' or 'social change' that represents either the aim of a discourse or the trigger for it.

Whether we agree with Teun van Dijk that critical analysts favour the *oppressed* in their discourse analyses, or with Ruth Wodak who thinks that "Language provides a finely articulated vehicle for differences in power in hierarchical social structures." (Wodak, 2006:4), or with Norman Fairclough who sees the relationship between language and society as a dialectical one and for whom 'social change' is the imperative of any type of modern discourse, we find ourselves at all times in the midst of the same task and in view of the same aim: that of regarding the discourse from more than just one angle in view of revealing its obvious meaning as well as the hidden one if it is the case (and it almost always is with political discourse).

When referring to the 'new enemy', the two leaders' statements use more or less the same constructs, expressions and syntagms meant to describe a type of enemy that is a representation of all the 'evil' and 'wrong-doing' of this world. They speak of it metaphorically and, what their discourse describes is, what we like to call, a *virtual enemy*. Yes, they do point, at certain times, at real figures like Osama Bin Laden, but the references to the enemy are never clear enough: whether it is Afghanistan as a state, or the Taliban regime, or Osama Bin Laden, or the terrorist networks, not to mention the shadow of a doubt ruling over the Iraq war. Their discourse does not seem to send a clear message regarding the enemy. When we said that they speak 'metaphorically' about the enemy, we had in mind their use of certain metaphors in describing it. According to rhetorical criticism (Gill and Whedbee, 1998: 172) 'figures of speech, including metaphors, can be identified in order to account for the aesthetic appeal of the text. [...] The fundamental form of human understanding is a metaphoric process; the mind grasps an unfamiliar idea only by comparison to or in terms of something already known.'[3]. Some of the expressions used by George Bush to characterise the enemy, the terrorists of 9/11 are: "enemies of freedom", "traitors of their own faith", "those who commit evil in the name of Allah", "our nation saw evil, the very worst of human nature", "those who are behind these evil acts", "the evil of terrorism", "rid the world of the evil-doers", "there are evil people in this world", "a brand of evil", etc. Words like 'evil', 'evil-doers', 'evil acts' are frequently used.

Tony Blair uses similar words and expressions in characterising the terrorists, the 'new enemy', because, in fact, both George W. Bush and Tony Blair speak of a 'new enemy' as if terrorists had never existed before. Whether they mean that terrorists had not attacked them before (although this cannot be the case since both countries had previously faced the danger of terrorist attacks), or that they had not considered them a 'publicly declared enemy'

3 Gill and Whedbee, 1998, pp. 172-73

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(which they are now because of the latest attacks that stand for a declaration of war) or that they represent a new type of enemy by their strategy of attacking (although this again cannot be the case since the terrorists' ways of attacking are known to have been threatening the world for many years), we do not know. What we know is that they are called the 'new enemy'. Of Blair's words and expressions we enumerate: “the violence and savagery of the fanatic”, “the actions of fanatics”, “the fanatic who commits the final act”, “fanatical views”, “a new and deadly virus has emerged”, “the new evil in our world”, “we will not rest until this evil is driven from our world”, “their barbarism”, “this machinery of terror”,”a fanaticism and wickedness that is beyond our normal contemplation”, etc.

We could also say that 'evil' as an archetypal metaphor in Blair's and Bush's discourse relates to atrocity, murder of the highest degree, human nature of the lowest species, and, as a conclusive aspect, it may easily be said that their discourses are dominated by the metaphor of evil. The choice of this metaphor is to be noted as it has symbolic meanings in more than just one field of interpretation: religion, philosophy, literature, sociology and politics, and it opposes the metaphor of 'good' and this opposition, which is inherent to the mind of every listener, reduces this war, this fight, to the eternal fight between good and evil. Thus, it makes it easier for the speaker to justify the meaning and the reason of the battle.

On the other hand, there seems to be an effort made by the speakers to point to and identify the targets of this war:

Bush –

“The enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends. It is not our many Arab friends.

Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists and every government that supports them.

Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there.

It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated.”

“The evidence we have gathered all points to a collection of loosely affiliated terrorist organizations known as al-Qaeda.”

“Al Qaeda is to terror what the Mafia is to crime. But its goal is not making money. Its goal is remaking the world and imposing its radical beliefs on people everywhere.

The United States respects the people of Afghanistan -- after all, we are currently its largest source of humanitarian aid -- but we condemn the Taliban regime.” (September 20th, 2001)

Blair –

“And as the coalition builds, and as our preparations continue, the terrorists inside Afghanistan, and the Taliban regime that harbours them, should not doubt the unity of the alliance being built against them, or our determination to do what is necessary to bring those responsible to account.”

“Our stated aim, as you know, is to bring to justice those responsible for the attacks of a fortnight ago, which killed several thousand people, including many, many British people. The Taliban regime stands in the way of that. But I also want to add this: our fight is with that regime, not with the people of Afghanistan.”

“Our fight is not with Islam. Our fight is with a terrorist network and a regime that sustains them in mutual support.” (September 25th, 2001)

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From a CDA perspective, this need of the politicians to establish points of reference in discourse, to establish rapports between their arguments and the reality of the context, is a need that may, for instance, come out of the relation between 'rhetoric, reality and resistance' that generally establishes itself in political language (Fairclough, 2000: 155):

Part of what makes politics possible and inevitable is the fact that gaps arise between rhetoric and reality, and become visible to people. The politics of language, the politics of the gaps between reality and rhetoric, is a fundamental part of politics, and it includes the various types of gap [...] between what people say and what they do, between action which is linguistic and action which takes other forms, between what people implicitly claim they are through their styles of performing and what other evidence suggest they really are. (Fairclough, 2000: 155-56)

It is safe to draw from here that political discourse analysis deals with filling the gaps, filling these gaps between 'reality' and 'resistance', between what politicians 'say they do and what they do'. Language, as always, proves to be the best tool. Fairclough explains this importance of language in politics as follows:

So what is special about politics and government? The crucial point is that although language is always an element of a social practice, it can be a more or less important element, a more or less salient part of the practice. Language is a more salient part of certain social practices than of others, and the relative salience of language in a social practice can change. So what I am claiming is (a) that politics and government are social practices in which language is salient – this is a durable feature of these social practices in comparison with others, (b) language is becoming more salient within these practices. (Fairclough 2000: 156)

Although the aim was not initially to get into discourse analysis of the 'war on terror', we discovered it necessary for our discussion on globalization as discourse to provide an insight by exemplifying on a particular type of political discourse, an analysis of fragments of the discourse of the 'war on terror'. The need came out of an impossibility to otherwise correlate our 'global' approach on discourse to real-life examples (much like in the same manner Steger discovered it compulsory to base his theoretical aspects on globalization on real-life examples that would come in support of his arguments). A reason we chose to discuss Blair's statements in comparison and, at the same time, in relation to Bush's was because it met our main argument that the discourse of globalization is always the result of more than one individual, all caught in context-dependent circumstances that affect their production of discourse, all sharing more or less common historic contexts, social values and social changes, political goals and interests. This type of discourses, along with the analysis that accompanies them, constitute a bridge towards the 'globalizing discourse', a denomination meant to send to the condition of this kind of discourse of being all-encompassing, of being overwhelmingly generalizing sometimes (and, by that, risking of proving itself superficial and undocumented), of attempting to reach all audiences (which is never possible), of trying to create a sensation of ubiquitousness by imposing a universally valid view of society and of social changes.

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