

# HEROES AGAINST VILLAINS

## Frames as the bedrock of unconscious thinking in political discourse

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**Abstract:** This article focuses on political leader discourses in the context of Kosovo-Serbia relations. It examines how political discourse is used to shape and influence national and international opinion, and to modify the presentation of reality by presenting political truth as historical truth. The analysis of the two speeches here by the leaders of both countries aims to identify their communication strategies, the most common linguistic structures that were used to form and shape the conflict resolution process, to deconstruct their narratives, and to compare them. As political speeches generally are built on metaphorical constructions and frames, we demonstrate how complex issues that were previously irreconcilable are represented in these speeches to gain authority, legitimacy, and power.

**Keywords:** leadership narratives; discourse analysis; conflict resolution; cognitive metaphors.

## 1. Introduction

The two speeches which are analysed here were taken from two contemporaneous international events, respectively the 78th session of the UN General Assembly in New York (September 2023) and the Paris Peace Forum (November 2023) delivered by the two leaders of Kosovo and Serbia (Albin Kurti and Aleksandar Vučić).<sup>1</sup>

We concentrate on these two texts as they both deal with the same topics (the question of Kosovo) and were produced almost at the same point in time and share the same objective (each speaker wants to put his version of events in the best light) allowing us to compare both speeches in the real-time context of each other. This allows us to focus on the single moment and the single context of the speech event in an approach similar to that of a forensic linguist looking at a specific text in isolation as a means to lead us to concrete conclusions.

The “Kosovar question” sees the clash of two different narratives, the Pristina one marked by the effort to acquire full international recognition: the Belgrade one intent on denying such recognition. Both these narratives are expressions of two different political cultures. In the range of pathologies associated with state weakness, Kamrava (2016, p. 8) cites as the most glaring, the state’s status, in particular its diminished standing in the international arena, and its ability proactively to promote or defend its interests.

Kosovo proclaimed its independence from Serbia (of which it was an autonomous province called Kosovo and Metohija) and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (of which Serbia was a constituent state) in 2008 and was immediately recognized by many, but not

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.predsednik.rs/en/press-center/news/address-by-the-president-of-the-republic-of-serbia-aleksandar-vucic-at-the-general-debate-of-the-78th-session-of-the-general-assembly-of-the-united-nations>  
<https://www.youtube.com/live/u4nbcsmHjI?si=yWHUXsas76-FJfhc>

all, members of the international community. Its very existence then, though taken for granted in many quarters, mostly among the Kosovars of ethnic Albanian descent, is still contested in others, in particular in Serbia itself and in some areas of Kosovo where the majority of the population is ethnically Serbian. Gaining recognition from all EU members and as much of the wider international community as possible remains the focus of Kosovan diplomacy while the reverse is true of current Serbian diplomacy, whose priority is on reversing the events of 2008 and returning “Kosovo and Metohija” to the Serbian fold.

## 2. Political Discourse

Language is a means of power, expressing, communicating, forming and shaping thoughts (Bregasi, Christiansen 2024). Language functions as both a foundational instrument and the essential substance of political discourse. Politicians employ linguistic strategies intentionally to influence and lead society. Leaders gain or lose their power using political language effectively or not, and people become powerless or gain strength, deceived or informed, through these discursive strategies (Corcoran 1990, p. 54).

During the communication, individuals engage not only through the lens of their roles, social boundaries, and relationships, but also in conveying subjective interpretations of the world. Such communication naturally reflects the diverse perspectives, experiences, and social positions of individuals, resulting in a complex interplay of meanings within social interactions.

In contrast, political communication is characterised by a distinct strategic approach. Those engaged in the political sphere deploy language not only to engage with society, but also to shape it in a manner that aligns with their ideological positions and values. They deliberately construct and disseminate representations of reality that reflect their interests and beliefs, which they seek not only to promote but also to embed as accepted truths. By means of this manipulation of discourse, political figures seek to produce a 'political truth' – a version of reality that aligns with their agenda and that they seek to legitimise it as historical fact.

This process of 'truth construction' serves a clear purpose: to reshape public perception and collective memory in ways that consolidate their authority, establish legitimacy, and enhance their power. By presenting their interpretations of events, policies, and societal issues as objective or inevitable, political elites can influence how society understands and remembers these events. The ultimate objective of this rhetorical strategy is not merely persuasion but the transformation of societal consensus to reflect a worldview that secures and reinforces their power within the political landscape. “There is no doubt that if we are concerned with language and politics, we have to be concerned with truth and falsity in relation to a real-world in which human interests and human suffering are real” (Chilton 2004, p. 49).

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

### 2.1. Political discourse in fragile societies

In the Balkan region, profound changes have taken place across all facets of life, including politics, economics, social structures, values, and even identities. All of the Balkan states have emerged from authoritarian regimes, and, in an authoritarian society, changes are mediated significantly through the power of language, carefully controlled by various sources of authority.

In his speech (Bregasi, Christiansen 2024), Vučić makes strategic language choices when referring to "Kosovo", often using the term "Kosovo and Metohija" (Serbia's official name for the region) or "Kosovo, southern province of the Republic of Serbia". He sometimes refers to it as "so-called Kosovo" to signal Serbia's non-recognition of Kosovo's independence. Occasionally he replaces "Kosovo" with "Pristina", as in "Pristina Prime Minister, Albin Kurti", thus downplaying the region's autonomous status.

This linguistic strategy reveals a nuanced stance: while Vučić mostly avoids legitimising Kosovo's statehood (with over 66% of references reinforcing Serbia's position), he uses the neutral term "Kosovo" in about a third of cases. This alternation between assertive and neutral language suggests a dual strategy. On the one hand, Vučić projects himself as a resolute nationalist who upholds Serbia's territorial claim. On the other hand, he displays a subtle, if cautious, pragmatism that may indicate an openness to dialogue or compromise under certain conditions. This dual approach suggests that he is balancing nationalist rhetoric with the political flexibility required in diplomatic contexts.

Let us analyse these two excerpts from the speeches of Vučić and Kurti [emphasis ours]:

Alexander Vučić	Albin Kurti
<p>Today, in Kosovo, southern Province of the Republic of Serbia, <b>the blunt violence is taking place</b>, exerted against the Serbs by the <b>separatist authorities of Albin Kurti</b>.</p> <p>Only last week, after who knows which failed round of the dialogue in Brussels, <b>Pristina prime minister</b>, Albin Kurti, after rejecting the European proposal for de-escalation, addressed the public in front of one of the main buildings of the European Union and in front of the millions of viewers of the media that were present conveyed to <b>not so many remaining Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija that the Serbs will, I quote ‘suffer and pay for the mistake they made’</b>.</p>	<p>Serbian army has 48 forward operating bases around our border, 20 of them are military, 20 gendarmerie, and it took Jake Sullivan from <b>National Security Council of White House to come out together with Secretary Blinken and say that this amassing of troops around the border of Kosova is unacceptable and they have to withdraw</b> in order to bring us back to rather peaceful situation with decrease tension.</p>

The Vučić text illustrates a strategic use of language to frame the political situation in Kosovo from his perspective. By referring to Kosovo as the 'southern province of the Republic of Serbia', the speaker denies Kosovo's sovereignty, which is in line with Serbia's

stance on the region. This term sets a confrontational tone, positioning Kosovo's actions under Kurti as hostile and illegitimate.

The speaker's choice of words such as 'blunt violence' and 'separatist authorities' reinforces the negative portrayal of Kurti and emphasises a victimised Serbian identity. This use of language serves to create solidarity with Serbian listeners while delegitimising the Kosovo government. The reference to Kurti's alleged statement that Serbs "will suffer and pay" uses reported speech to convey an image of Kurti as antagonistic, thus escalating perceptions of conflict.

Overall, this discourse strategy strengthens the Serbian position by portraying Kurti's leadership as oppressive and dangerous, subtly appealing to an international audience to gain sympathy and support for Serbia's stance on Kosovo.

On the other hand, the Kurti text reflects several strategic rhetorical choices aimed at framing the situation between Serbia and Kosovo and attributing responsibility for rising tensions.

Let us now give a look carefully in terms of Discourse Analysis:

1. Quantification and specificity: By mentioning the "48 forward operating bases" along the border with Kosovo and breaking these down into "20 military" and "20 gendarmerie" bases, the speaker emphasises the scale and militarised nature of Serbia's presence. The specificity creates a sense of urgency and immediacy, implying a significant threat and heightening the listeners' concern about Serbia's military intentions.

2. Legitimacy and authority through external validation: The text refers to senior American officials - Jake Sullivan of the National Security Council and Secretary of State Antony Blinken - to validate the claim that Serbia's troop deployment is problematic. The invocation of these authorities suggests that the issue is not only local but international in scope, reinforcing that Kosovo's concerns are shared by powerful global actors. This external validation serves to legitimise the spokesperson's position and highlights the unacceptability of Serbia's actions according to respected global voices.

3. Implied aggression and threat framing: The phrase 'amassing troops around the border' frames Serbia's military actions as aggressive and potentially escalating to conflict. This choice of words implies a deliberate build-up and serves to portray Serbia as a direct threat to Kosovo's stability, contrasting it with the goal of a "peaceful situation". By emphasising this military build-up, the speaker positions Serbia as the provocateur and Kosovo as under threat, thereby justifying a defensive or reactive stance by Kosovo.

4. Appeal to peace and stability: The phrase 'to return to a more peaceful situation with reduced tensions' implies that peace was the previous status quo, disrupted by Serbia's military actions. This framing subtly presents Kosovo as seeking a return to normalcy and stability, positioning Kosovo as committed to peace and indirectly casting Serbia as the disrupter.

5. Impersonal and passive constructions: The use of passive phrases such as 'it took Jake Sullivan... to come out' and 'they have to withdraw' obscures direct agency on the part of Kosovo, suggesting that international actors, rather than Kosovo itself, are putting pressure on Serbia. This shifts some responsibility to international powers, reinforcing the idea that Kosovo's position has broad support and that the responsibility for action lies with Serbia, under international scrutiny.

In summary, the text uses a combination of specificity, invocation of authority, implied threat and appeals to peace to position Serbia as the aggressor and Kosovo as the passive, threatened party seeking international intervention. These choices serve to construct a narrative in which Kosovo's position is both justified and supported by influential global actors, emphasising the gravity of Serbia's actions and Kosovo's commitment to peace.

## 2.2. Framing in cognitive linguistic

Language serves as a tool of power, enabling individuals to express, communicate, shape and influence thoughts. Recently, a growing body of research has focused on frames and metaphors as methods for exploring how concrete concepts are extended to abstract intangible ones. According to cognitive science, our thoughts are not defined by facts, but by frames, which tend to structure a huge part of our thoughts. Framing is a deliberate process of selecting and organizing visual or textual elements in order to effectively communicate a particular meaning or message. Every single word activates a frame in the recipient's head. This applies to all languages.

Wehling (2016) explores the underlying cognitive processes that make frames and metaphors so influential in shaping public opinion and political discourse. Frames and metaphors, she argues, are powerful because they structure how people interpret complex social and political issues, effectively guiding how information is understood and evaluated. This process, often unconscious, helps individuals to make sense of the world in a way that is consistent with their pre-existing beliefs and cultural background.

Wehling also emphasises that for the democratic discourse to remain healthy and authentic, citizens need to be aware of the dominant frames used in social and political contexts. By comparing these frames with their own values, individuals can critically assess whether the dominant narratives resonate with their personal beliefs. This self-reflection is essential for anyone who wants to communicate their worldview honestly and transparently. Only by aligning what they say with their personal values, rather than simply adopting widely accepted frames, can individuals contribute to a more genuine and diverse democratic dialogue.

## 3. Conceptual Frames

Fillmore (1985) discovered that words are defined in relation to conceptual frames, as he identified that groups of related words, called “semantic fields,” are defined with respect to the same frame. Frames can be used to emphasize certain aspects of an image or text and obscure or remove others, they can be used to create a particular perspective or interpretation of the content.

The choice of framing has important implications for how we understand and respond to texts, images or events. Language gets its power because it is defined relative to frames, prototypes, metaphors, narratives, images, and emotions (Lakoff 2009, p. 15). This theoretical framework is crucial for our analysis, as both political leaders under examination employ cultural prototypes, themes, images, and icons to construct their contrasting narratives. Framing is inherently subjective, shaped by cultural, social, and political influences. Language triggers these selective frames, whose impact varies from person to person based on individual experiences and cognitive structures.

Frames function as complex narratives, which are made up of smaller ones with very simple structures like those found in personal life stories, fairy tales, literature and drama. Chilton (2004) views frames as theoretical constructs with some cognitive and neural reality, which are related to the conceptualization of situation types and their expression in language. Individuals match logical forms derived interpretively from the utterances produced by others to their mental representation of reality derived via perception and limited or coloured by their cognitive apparatus (Chilton 2004, p.50).

### 3.1. Troublesome referents

In language use, the speaker introduces discourse referents that fulfil various thematic roles, which are defined by the relationships between these referents. The speaker represents the reality which he believes, or wants others to believe in. There are various meaning ingredients the speaker put into these discourse realities, but the essential one is the projection of ‘who does what to whom, when and where’. To filter out these meaning-making ingredients that set up the recurring discourse referents and prompt for their semantic roles, Chilton (2004) gives this example by President Clinton in 1999:

My fellow Americans, today our Armed Forces joined our NATO allies in air strikes against Serbian forces responsible for the brutality in Kosovo. We have acted with resolve for several reasons. We act to protect thousands of innocent people in Kosovo from a mounting military offensive. We act to prevent a wider war; to diffuse a powder keg at the heart of Europe that has exploded twice before in this century with catastrophic results. And we act to stand united with our allies for peace. By acting now we are upholding our values, protecting our interests and advancing the cause of peace.

Chilton unpacked the sentences to make propositional representations in a table (taken from Chilton 2004, p. 55) of Argument - Predicate structure along with their roles and relations, which also manifest in other forms—within certain noun phrases, in subordinate clauses where some arguments may be implied, and in the semantic phenomenon of presupposition, which is triggered by various syntactic and lexical structures.

<i>Argument 1</i> typically P-Agent, grammatical subject, typically a noun phrase	<i>Predicate</i> relation, action existence, etc., intransitive, transitive or ditransitive verb	<i>Argument 2</i> typically P-Patient, grammatical object, typically a noun phrase	<i>Other</i> arguments e.g., noun, phrase or prepositional phrase	<i>Adjunct/conjunct</i> e.g., adverbs, participle phrases, conjunctions like 'and', 'if'
Our Armed forces <b>agent</b> ( <b>themes, i.e., thing moving</b> )	joined	our NATO allies <b>patient</b> ( <b>location</b> )	in	today air strikes against Serbian forces responsible for the brutality in Kosovo
[US forces and NATO forces] <b>agent</b>	[made air strikes against]	[Serbian forces responsible for the brutality in Kosovo] <b>patient</b>		
[Serbian forces] <b>agent</b>	[are responsible for]	[the brutality in Kosovo] <b>patient</b>		
[brutality]	[exists]		[in Kosovo]	

Table 1  
Propositional representations (Chilton 2004, p. 55).

The same intervention of NATO, is represented by Vučić with emotional language, drawing a specific parallel between the behaviour of certain UN members then (1999) with now:

“[...] almost all western powers brutally violated both the UN Charter and the UN Resolution 1244, which had been passed in this renowned Organization, as they denied and violated precisely those principles they are defending today, and it happened twenty for and exactly fifteen years ago.”

It is again notable that, despite his indignation, Vučić still fails to specify precisely who he believes deserves such criticism, which is itself revealing, more in what he *does not* say than what he says. And this is a conscious strategy to keep his dual position: on one side he wants Serbia to be part of the European Union, on the other side he wants to remind them that they have been aggressors.

As it is clear now in linguistics, the meaning of words, of sentences, and of discourses are in the mind, not in what is objectively said. Meaning is not a matter of matching expressions to things. One of the four strategic functions of language in use by Chilton and Schäffner (1997, pp. 211-215) is the representation/misrepresentation as a matter of discourse control, which may be quantitative or qualitative. If qualitative misrepresentation is simply lying, in its most extreme manifestation, quantitative misrepresentation, as euphemism, has the cognitive effect of conceptually ‘blurring’ or ‘defocusing’ unwanted referents. Implicit meanings of various types also constitute a means of diverting attention from troublesome referents (Chilton 2004, p. 46).

In Vučić's speech, he refers to Europe, the European Union and related organisations 17 times, portraying Serbia as a partner or future member. In contrast, he mentions the US only once and makes a brief reference to Euro-Atlantic integration. Notably, he omits any direct mention of the 1999 NATO intervention by Europe and the US that led to Kosovo's independence. Instead, he refers vaguely to 'Western powers' and 'powerful countries', creating a selective narrative that subtly disassociates Europe and the US from these actions and influences.

This is a clear case of reality being misrepresented through vague, unfocused, and unnecessary references. It directly reflects a violation of Grice's maxims of quality, quantity, and manner. “When you accept a particular narrative, you ignore or hide realities that contradict it. Narratives have a powerful effect in hiding reality” (Lakoff 2009, p. 37).

### 3.2. The role of frames

As we said previously, frames are complex structures built by simple narratives. Simple narratives have the form of frame-based scenarios, but with extra structure. Each frame has a role (similar to a cast of characters), and there are relations between the roles, and scenarios performed by those playing the roles (Lakoff 2009, p. 22). Kurti's speech follows a general ‘rescue’ narrative, featuring various ‘semantic roles’—key characters, actions, and instruments such as the *Hero*, the *Victim*, the *Villain*, the *Helpers* (Lakoff 2009, p.24).

In Kurti's speech these roles are: Victim - the Albanian people, state of Kosovo; Hero - Kurti, Villain- Vučić, Serbian State; Helper - NATO and the EU. In the discourse of Vučić, some of these roles are not clear, even if we could name them as: Hero- Vučić, Victim- Serbian People, Villain- NATO and EU members, Helpers - Russia. Vučić is vague not only about the identity of the “great powers” but he also avoids providing crucial detail about the wrongs that he alleges were committed against his country, in particular in 1999.

### 3.3. *Russia and Ukraine as a reference narrative*

Some states are overtly founded on struggles for power. In this context Vučić's discourse on Russia is straightforward. In addressing this relationship, President Vučić frequently emphasises the deep-rooted, historical bond between the nation in question and Serbia. He often highlights the "centuries-long traditional friendship" and "traditional ties" between the two countries, underscoring a longstanding alliance that has withstood the tests of time. This rhetoric reflects an intention to honour and reinforce the cultural, political, and historical connections that have unified both countries over generations, suggesting a continuity of mutual respect and shared values.

The phrase, "They didn't laugh out loud when the Russian President used the very same words to justify his attack on Ukraine," is notable in that it indirectly refers to the Euro-Americans through the anaphoric use of "They." By avoiding explicit naming, the phrase subtly positions Euro-Americans in contrast to Russia, highlighting an implicit disparity in responses or attitudes between the two. The strategy here seems to be to treat the countries of Europe and the USA in a similar way to the concept of an independent Kosovo outside of Serbia in two different, apparently contradictory ways: on the one hand, a community of nations and organisations that Serbia is happy to be part of, and with which it aspires to integrate more; on the other, as unnamed dark forces that have worked against Serbia's interests in the past. Again, this could be seen as inconsistency, or as a deliberate strategy, displaying opportunism: a mental agility that allows one to keep all options open in the rapidly changing geopolitical situation of the 2020s (Bregasi, Christiansen 2024).

Vučić [emphasis ours]:

Nevertheless, worse than anything is that all those who **committed aggression against the Republic of Serbia, lecture today about territorial integrity of Ukraine**, as if we didn't support the integrity of Ukraine, and we do support it and we will keep supporting it, because we do not change our politics and **we do not change our principles**, regardless of centuries-long traditional friendship with the Russian Federation. To us, **every violence is the same, every violation of the UN Charter is the same**, regardless of the strength of the power that exerts it or inevitably similar excuses it makes for its **illegal and immoral behaviour**.

The underlying message implies that such actions are deemed justifiable because certain unnamed great powers – referred to as "villains" – engaged in similar conduct during their invasion (or intervention) in Serbia, which is depicted here as the "victim" in 1999. Although the rhetoric is forceful and unambiguous, the actual argument is obscured by layers of ambiguity, allowing for multiple interpretations. The core message is that the great powers (cast as "Villains") adhere to the conviction that they are entitled to act with impunity, disregarding their own misdeeds while censoring others (designated as "helpers") for engaging in analogous actions. However, Vučić once again fails to specify the exact actions in question or to clarify the precise nature of their similarity, which would seem to be a crucial element in strengthening his argument. In fact, he dismisses the need for such elaboration by espousing the morally dubious principle that "every violence is the same etc."; in essence, if A breaks one rule, then B has the right to break the same rule, even in a far more grievous manner, and expect to be treated in the same way (Bregasi, Christiansen 2024).



### 3.4. The Strategic Use of Conceptual Metaphors in Political Discourse

Both leaders use territorial integrity as a core element of their speeches considering it a fundamental value and a prerequisite for the establishment of normal relations between the two nations. Nevertheless, the manner in which this principle is articulated ultimately results in a stalemate.

Vučić uses the concept of "territorial integrity" as a main conceptual metaphor to accuse EU members of "aggression" against Serbia. In order to reinforce his argument, he draws a parallel with the situation in Ukraine. By moving the temporal and the spatial context from Kosovo in 1999 to Ukraine in 2022, while omitting any reference to the motives behind NATO's intervention against Serbia, he effectively crafts a narrative that serves his political objectives. This framing allows Vučić to justify not only Serbia's stance on Kosovo but also Serbia's unique position as the only country in the region that has not condemned Russia for its aggression in Ukraine. Such rhetorical choices serve to elucidate pivotal aspects of Serbia's political trajectory, while simultaneously alluding to the country's prospective trajectory.

On the other hand, Kurti presents a narrative which mirrors that of Vučić but in which the actors are the same, but with inverted roles: Kurti starts his speech with spatial and temporal arguments to build his narrative in order to make it look more like reality than a political truth [emphasis ours]:

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

It is evident that this speech is a kind of journalistic report, where Kurti plays the role of the reporter who tells the story from the place, respecting strictly the rules of a good report, which has to fulfil the five Wh-s: who, what, when, where, and why. The audience is helped

to believe his version because Kurti has put them within a narrative which is familiar from popular culture that they have seen thousands of versions of on TV and other media.

Although this may be an effective strategy to lend credibility to the narrative, it is ultimately still Kurti's version of events. It is important to remember that Kurti is a politician, not a journalist, and therefore his account may be biased. The function of the analyst is to examine the narrative in question and present it in a transparent manner for the benefit of the reader. "Neural binding allows these permanent general narrative structures to be applied to ever new special cases. That's why the same narrative structures keep recurring, from war to war, from celebrity to celebrity, from one political figure to another" (Lakoff 2009, p. 38).

By adopting this strategy, Kurti redirects the apprehension initially evoked by his initial core narrative towards a new narrative framework centred on recent events. By repurposing this emotion, he seeks to reinforce his message, thereby extending the influence of his original storyline and shaping public perception of the current situation. This strategy enables him to maintain continuity between past concerns and present developments, thereby enhancing the impact of his messaging (Lakoff 2009, p. 41):

The brain supplies the reasons. First, stresses like fear (of terrorist attacks), worry (say, about finances, health care, and so on), and overwork tend to activate the norepinephrine system, the system of negative emotions. The result is a reduced capacity to notice. Second, the right conceptual framework must be in place in order to recognize apparently different events as the same kind of event.

## 4. Conclusions

This article employs critical discourse analysis to examine the role of language in political communication. It acknowledges that language, as expressed through discourse, is a primary instrument for constructing, shaping, and either sustaining or altering political narratives. The speeches under examination have been meticulously drafted and revised, thereby establishing them as the indisputable result of deliberate political choices intended to reinforce or reshape the narratives in question within the context of an ongoing political dialogue.

Politicians and political leaders construct their narratives to present themselves in the best possible way in the light of the values and moral codes and construct their own identity as Hero / Leader, because Heroes / Leaders are in a position to analyse a situation better than the People/Voters, and to identify and evaluate the various solutions. They thus have the opportunity, and the duty, to guide their audience towards future scenarios, and equally importantly to create new narratives in order to make the same comprehensible, and palatable. Hitherto, in the conflict between Kosovo and Serbia, leaders have limited themselves to constructing a simple narrative that they know their own community will immediately recognise and understand. This is because they are in essence repeating stories that each community has been telling itself for decades, even centuries.

If leaders fail to adjust the narrative frames they employ, they will struggle to persuade the other side, and their dialogue will remain polarized, with slow progress toward reconciliation. In short, if leaders want to act like simple politicians and

merely repeat what they know their voters already believe, and want to have confirmed, then there is little hope for progress.

As narratives influence our opportunities, challenges, and lived realities, individuals will continue to endorse their preferred political leaders as long as they perceive them as heroes—or at least as long as they regard their opponents as villains.

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