

D. Mukhortov^{1,2}, A. Dyment²

¹ Moscow State Institute of International Relations (University) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Moscow, 119454, Russian Federation;

² Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, 119991, Russian Federation

Tracking changes to the stylistic behaviour of Tony Blair as Prime Minister and former Prime Minister

This article features the communicative behaviour of Tony Blair in his premier and post-premier years. It puts forward and corroborates the hypothesis that about two years after his landslide victory in the parliamentary election, Blair switched his strategy from that of an ardent reformer and a pacifist to a hawk, opportunist and conformist, and stuck to it to the end of his legislatures. The charges against Blair in 2016 on the nation's involvement in the Iraqi military campaign in 2003 caused him to change his stylistic behaviour. Special emphasis is laid on how Blair had long exploited a series of communicative tactics with the intent to manipulate mass consciousness. These include epithets, syntactic repetitions and rhetorical questions; they become frequent in post-premier years. Blair's selected discourses in 2003, when he was campaigning for Britain's military involvement in Iraq, and in 2016, when he was trying to justify his actions in court, reveal deception markers, specifically a distribution of I / we pronouns in text, which point to Blair's evasion strategy. A meaningful part of Blair's manipulative strategy was to create and sustain several political myths, including 'appeal for unity', 'creation of the Evil opposition', and 'appeal to democratic countries as a legitimate source of power'. These were drawn on ungrounded and unverifiable statements.

Key words: Tony Blair, communicative behaviour, communicative tactics, communicative strategy, mass consciousness manipulations, deception markers, political myth

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Д.С. Мухортов^{1,2}, А.Р. Дымент¹

¹Московский государственный институт международных отношений (университет) Министерства иностранных дел Российской Федерации, 119454 г. Москва, Российская Федерация

²Московский государственный университет имени М.В. Ломоносова, 119991 г. Москва, Российская Федерация

О некоторых изменениях в коммуникативном поведении языковой личности политика в период нахождения у власти и после ухода с должности (на примере 73-го премьер-министра Великобритании Тони Блэра)

В статье проводится анализ некоторых особенностей коммуникативного поведения Тони Блэра в период его премьерства и пост-премьерства. Докладывается гипотеза о том, что спустя некоторое время после победы на парламентских выборах Т. Блэр изменил свою дискурсивную стратегию миротворца и активного реформатора в пользу стратегии проведения милитаристской политики и остался верен ей до конца всех своих legislatur. Основным фактором изменения вербального поведения политика стал судебный процесс 2016 г., на котором Т. Блэру было предъявлено официальное обвинение в том, что он вовлек вооруженные силы страны в военную иракскую кампанию. Анализ устной и письменной речи политика показал, что в ходе интервью и при чтении своих речей Блэр использует схожие риторические приемы: эпитеты,

синтаксические повторы, риторические вопросы. Их использование становится рекуррентным приемом в постпремьерском дискурсе Т. Блэра. Особое внимание на себя обращает то, как с помощью несложных коммуникативных тактик политик воздействовал на массовое сознание десятилетиями. На это указывает анализ дискурсивных «маркеров лжи» (*false, or deception, markers*) – в частности, распределение личных местоимений первого лица *I/we* – в избранных речах Блэра 2003 г., когда он агитировал нацию за вторжение в Ирак, и 2016 г., когда он был привлечен к суду за свои милитаристские инициативы. Значимой частью манипулятивной стратегии Блэра было создание и поддержание ряда политических мифов: «нация и лидер едины в своих устремлениях» (*appeal for unity*), «у нации есть полюс зла, с которым она должна бороться» (*creation of the Evil opposition*), «нация должна взывать к авторитету демократических стран как легитимного источника власти на планете» (*appeal to a 'good' legitimate power source, democratic countries*). Основой мифотворчества политика среди прочего становятся необоснованные и неверифицируемые утверждения.

Ключевые слова: Тони Блэр, коммуникативное поведение, коммуникативные тактики, коммуникативная стратегия, манипуляции массовым сознанием, «маркеры лжи», политический миф

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1. Introduction

This paper attempts to provide new insights into the language profile of Tony Blair, a UK Prime Minister (1997–2007) who launched a new Labour policy, questioned the essence of monarchy, and involved Britain in a military conflict in Iraq.

Special emphasis is laid on the contrastive analysis of Tony Blair's premier and post-premier rhetoric, with the intent to track the changing stylistic behavior and manipulative discourse of the ex-premier. The recent investigation into British involvement in the Iraq military campaign again makes Blair's rhetoric a research object, showing that a politician in power and a politician out of office may differ substantially.

The speeches under analysis are General election victory speech, May 2, 1997; the speech on death of Diana, Princess of Wales, August 31, 1997; the speech on Kosovo, March 23, 1999; General election victory speech, June 2001; On September 11 attacks, September 11, 2001; Speech at the Labour

Party Convention, October 1, 2002; The Opening Speech at the House of Commons Debate on the Iraq Crisis, March 18, 2003; General election victory speech, May 6, 2005; On London Explosions, July 7, 2005; and Blair's resignation speech, May 10, 2007.¹ They embrace the most significant events of Blair's premiership and we find them most revealing for research purposes.

Moreover, we analyze some parts of Blair's memoirs (*A Journey*, 2010), dedicated to the Iraq War, Kosovo, and 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Of special interest are the speeches made after resignation, all related to foreign and domestic issues (for example, Brexit): Tony Blair's statement in response to the Iraq war inquiry, 2016; Tony Blair's speech on blocking Brexit, 2017; Remarks by Tony Blair on receiving the Lincoln Leadership Award, 2018.

Contrastive analysis of a politician's premier and post-premier years is a relatively new subject of political discourse studies as there have been few works on the subject recently. These include the work of Ernest Zhang and William L. Benoit on the discourse of the former Chinese Health Minister Zhang Wenkang and Daniel Eric Schabot's dissertation on Jimmy Carter's post-presidential rhetoric.

This research is drawn on sociolinguistic theories of language profiling, including theories of Elena Sheygal, Ruth Wodak, Alan Partington, Adrean Beard, Jason Allen Edwards, and Norman Fairclough. In addition to studying

¹ List of speeches: Blair T. (1999). On Kosovo. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/mar/23/balkans.tonyblair> (date of access: 9.03.2020); Blair T. (2001). General election victory speech. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2001/jun/08/election2001.electionspast1> (date of access: 9.03.2020); Blair T. (2001). On September 11 attacks. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/sep/11/september11.usa9> (date of access: 9.03.2020); Blair T. (2002). Speech at the Labour Party Convention. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2002/oct/01/labourconference.labour14> (date of access: 9.03.2020); Blair T. (2003). The opening speech at the house of commons debate on the Iraq crisis. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2003/mar/18/foreignpolicy.iraq1> (date of access: 9.03.2020); Blair T. (2005). General election victory speech. URL: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/vote_2005/frontpage/4522185.stm (date of access: 9.03.2020); Blair T. (2005). On London explosions. URL: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-354989/Blairs-London-terror-statement-full.html> (date of access: 9.03.2020); Blair T. (2007). Blair's resignation speech. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2007/may/10/labourleadership.labour2> (date of access: 9.03.2020); Blair T. (2010). Interview on this morning 8th September 2010. URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HISGsi_reos; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RGX6IJUjbiA> (date of access: 9.03.2020); Blair T. (2016). Blair's statement in response to the Iraq war inquiry. URL: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/chilcot-report-tony-blair-read-response-statement-in-full-iraq-war-inquiry-a7123251.html> (date of access: 9.03.2020); Blair T. (2017). Tony Blair's speech on blocking Brexit. URL: <http://uk.businessinsider.com/tony-blair-full-speech-on-blocking-brexit-article-50-eu-second-referendum-2017-2> (date of access: 9.03.2020); Blair T. (2018). Remarks by Tony Blair on receiving the Lincoln Leadership Award. URL: <https://institute.global/news/tony-blair-we-must-learn-again-politics-building-bridges> (date of access: 9.03.2020).

lexical and phraseological idiosyncrasies as integral part of Blair's language profile, an attempt is made to analyze the politician's strategies and tactics helping him to seize power and manipulate mass consciousness. To this end, we employ theories by Oksana Issers, Olga Mikhalyova, Greg Myers, Sandra Silberstein, and Edelman Murray. Another focus of research is true/false markers in a politician's discourse. The seminal works on true/false discourse markers are by James Pennebaker, Valery Belyanin, Evgeny Larin and Natalia Myslitskaya.

2. Origins of Blair's rhetoric

In his book *Politicians and Rhetoric*, Jonathan Charteris-Black points out that a politician's success lies in the eyes of the audience. The public is watchful of both his way of speaking and his visual image. Even though it is important for voters to witness the consistency of his words and actions, their opinions are strongly affected by the impression which he creates by his style and self-representation.

Analyzing idiosyncrasies, we may come to understand how a politician manages to win people's approval and admiration. J.M. Burns says: 'Leadership over human beings is exercised when persons with certain motives and purposes mobilize, in competition or conflict with others, institutional, political, psychological, and other resources so as to arouse, engage, and satisfy the motives of followers.' [Burns, 1978]. Ernest Zhang and William L. Benoit on the discourse of the former Chinese Health Minister Zhang Wenkang and Daniel Eric Schabot's dissertation on Jimmy Carter's post-presidential rhetoric.

Charteris-Black claims that Blair "picked up some of Thatcher's behavior models and methods of convincing and attracting the people". He argues that Blair "realized how successfully she had developed a personality cult based on certainty and aggression and this is something that ultimately <...> his rhetoric sought to emulate" [Charteris-Black, 2011, p. 224].

We cannot say for sure that Blair imitated Thatcher, it would take some time to explore the question; he just understood the key to her success and used it to earn admiration, mixing it with his own strong orator skills and education. Blair's confidence, supported by his smooth and grammatically correct speech, made him sound believable and win people's hearts.

One of the main strategies of Blair's rhetoric was creating the image of a righteous hero. Interestingly, it was not a fully original idea. Blair admired Margaret Thatcher a lot, he would ask her for advice and adopted some of her rhetorical patterns and ideas. Both believed that Great Britain was a unique, powerful country with a long and rich history, and it was literally their mission to "save" it in this new world. "They wanted back

the ancient glorious past of Britain and both agreed that America would play an important role to achieve this aim” [Muñoz, 2011, p. 83]. This idea developed due to Blair’s religious views, among other factors.

“As he aged”, Charteris-Black says, “Blair dropped the meek and diffident manner of his youth to become a preacher-politician employing what can be described as Conviction Rhetoric” [Charteris-Black, 2011, p. 224].

Blair tried to act as if he was a savior of the innocent and deprived. He started his leadership defending the rights of the poor and needy. He used metaphors from “the domains of good and evil, he implied that he was (and is) an ethical man who appealed to others who shared these values [Ibid, p. 319].

Apart from “saving” Great Britain and the innocent and deprived, Blair tried to act as a missionary, persuading America and the EU to accept Vladimir Putin and Russia. Such actions were not novelty, as Thatcher did just the same by accepting Gorbachev. Due to their approaches, some European countries “began to maintain closer relationships with Russia” [Muñoz, 2011, p. 84].

However, later Blair used it for something bigger. The Iraq War was Blair’s opportunity to act like a superhero. In his speeches, he was creating an image of innocent Iraqis who desperately needed help from powerful democratic countries, meaning the United Kingdom and the USA. He did his best to convince his people that the UK’s interference in the Iraq war was essential for saving the needy. Regrettably, the more British lives were lost, the more committed Blair was to “an ethical position” and the more pronounced was his rhetorical style [Charteris-Black, 2011, p. 223]. Moreover, Charteris-Black justly notes that Blair manages to sound earnest due to the occasional hesitancy and informality. His speech was clear, simple, and free of redundancies.

To reiterate, there were a lot of things in common between Blair and Thatcher. Both politicians were excellent orators. However, Blair had one thing that made him unique – he possessed natural charm and charisma that captivated the people. Blair knew exactly what masses wanted him to say.

Blair’s success can be attributed to the fact that he was able to remodel the Labour Party rhetoric, “adopting many elements of the free-market orientated conservatives seen under the government of Margaret Thatcher” [Best, 2012, p. 12], and leaving behind the old rhetoric positions of the Labour party that were considered to be out-of-date. Blair introduced “a new rhetorical theme that came to define his government in the “New Labour” project” [Ibid].

Blair repeatedly showed his outstanding ability to analyze and use the obtained information. He realized that it was time for British politicians

to merge the official style of their rhetoric with “Speaking English”: “This new style of communication was in direct contrast to that of the Labour Opposition during the period of Margaret Thatcher’s domination. In ‘Old’ Labour discourse there was a divergence between the discourse of party politics and the discourse of ordinary people. New Labour responded to developments in American political discourse” [Charteris-Black, 2011, p. 226].

Blair shifted from formal style to informal quite naturally, frequently using the first person singular, expressed his own feelings and used some common expressions to sound intimate and trustworthy. This is also attributable to the growing authority of mass media, particularly television, as camera operators frequently used close-ups, which automatically called for more informal style of communication: “By speaking the same language as the electorate Blair reduces the rhetorical distance between himself and the mass audience he aims to reach” [Ibid, p. 227].

Researchers claim that Blair’s premiership rhetoric was extremely emotional, even passionate. Aristotle in his *Rhetoric* states that emotional speeches are the most convincing and sincere. Apparently, Blair knew Aristotle’s works and applied that knowledge to its full extent. Reporters constantly wrote about Blair’s manner of making speeches, notably his gestures and rising and falling intonation contours. This created the impression of sincerity. It was important “not only what Blair said, but *how he* said it too. Blair seems to have understood the importance of pathos in rhetoric... The emotional tone of the speech was undoubtedly important; otherwise, reporters would hardly have paid attention to it” [Hamilton, 2012, p. 8].

Hamilton also points out that Blair tends to use ‘dialogic’ models in his speech: “In the dialogic model, claims are met by counterclaims, thereby giving the impression that rational argument means “moving” from one “position” to another until a final position is “reached” and the action of making claims and counterclaims ends” [Ibid, p. 14].

3. Tony Blair’s stylistic behavior over three tenures

3.1. Tony Blair: 1997–2001

We shall now take a closer look at Blair’s rhetoric during the first tenure. Starting as one of the youngest Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom, Blair had a great responsibility on him. There were less than three years before the New Millennium – one of his most successful concepts – that is why Blair did his best to try to prove that people had made the right decision choosing him and the Labour Party to rule the country.

In an attempt to identify some key concepts and rhetorical patterns during Blair's first term we selected three speeches: General election victory speech, May 2, 1997; the Speech on death of Diana, Princess of Wales, August 31, 1997; and the Speech on Kosovo, March 23, 1999. All marking momentous events.

General election victory speech, 2 May 1997

Understandably, the traditional victory speech after General Elections was full of joy and hope. The leitmotifs of the speech were the *new era* and the *new millennium*. The anticipation of the new millennium implied welcoming progress, renovation, and change. The idea of novelty irradiated to many different notions in the speech. Blair calls his party "**New Labour**", speaks about 'different and **new** economic world', '**new** era of politics', even '**Britain renewed**' (Blair, 1997).

Blair sees 'change' in almost positive vein: "uniting to face the **changes** of the future", "if we have the courage to **change** then we could do it and we did it", 'Britain **renewed** <...> **modernizing** our welfare state <...> **rebuilding** our National Health Service' (Blair, 1997). It was making a good contrast with the Conservative party, which had ruled the country for eighteen years. The topics were conventional, nothing out of the ordinary: **family values**, the importance of **children**. But after the failure of Thatcher's Cabinet and Thatcher's rigid policy people heard of something mundane and most promising.

Another important concept he develops is "**people as a nation**". Blair says bluntly: 'We will speak up for <...> majority of the **British people** whose voices have been silent for all too long in our political life', 'We build a **nation united** with common purpose <...> **no one excluded, no one told that they do not matter**' (Blair, 1997).

At some points he says "we" and "us" to show unity of the party and the people: "We equip **our** country for the future", "...uniting to put... the past behind **us**, uniting to face the challenges of the future, **uniting at long last as one nation**" (Blair, 1997). Such optimistic slogans strongly encouraged people, as they wanted to be part of progress, part of the *new era*, and only a young leader and a new government could give them this opportunity at that time. At least, it was what they believed, and Blair successfully proved that it had been the best decision to have chosen him and Labour party as the leading national force.

The idea of national unity is supported by the concept of *Britain as a unique powerful country*: '<...> Britain that **stands tall in** the world whose sense of future is as certain and confident as its sense of its own history', 'People of Britain are **united** <...> around basic British values' (Blair, 1997).

The speech on death of Diana, Princess of Wales, 31 August 1997

Only three months after the Elections, the nation was shaken by a tragedy. The darling of the whole country, Princess Diana died in a car accident. Tony Blair made a short, but emotional speech. A speech with a different tone. It is full of real pain and sorrow, even though it is not completely devoid of Blair's usual optimism. For example, at the end of the speech he says: 'She was the *people's princess* and that's how it *will* stay, how she *will* remain in *our* hearts and *our* memories forever' (Blair, 1997). The attribute "people's princess" and pronoun "our" serve to unite the people, the party, and Diana is proclaimed as a national symbol.

When the royal house kept silence about Diana, Blair seized the day, showing his affinity with the people, who overwhelmingly mourned over Diana's death.

The speech on Kosovo, 23 March 1999

In March 1999, Blair made a speech on Kosovo events after the NATO's decision to intervene in the armed conflict there. It had been less than 2 years from the previous speech, but we can already see a dramatic change to the tone and feel the shift in stress. Exploiting his previous concepts and adding some new ones, Blair turns them where necessary.

The concept of the British people as a united nation with a strong national identity is key in Blair's rhetoric. He uses it in this speech to arouse people's sympathy towards 'thousands *of innocent civilians*' in Kosovo, whose "only desire is to *live in peace*' (Blair, 1999).

This was indicative of 'Si vis pacem, para bellum'. Blair set in motion the process of convincing the nation that what was being done was done on their behalf. Part of his 'smart' manipulative strategy [Hanina, 2013, p. 156] was to actively use 'we' instead of 'I': '*We* must act <...> we have no alternative but to act and act we will' (Blair, 1999).

'We' sounds as if the people had already agreed to send their men to join the forces in Kosovo. It positively helped Blair to sound persuasive. In this speech, we encounter the first mention of '**dictator**', the word which became a regular attribute in Blair's discourse. This speech was a rehearsal of speeches on Iraq, four years later.

To conclude, the years 1997–1999 had marked a shift in Blair's rhetoric from positively connoted and impressive '**new millennium**', '**changes for the future**', and '**people of Great Britain**', which were designed to unite the nation and get it oriented toward a bright future, to '**innocent civilians**', '**peace**', and '**dictator**' which were about something remote that had nothing to do with Britain and its future. The domestic agenda had changed to gratify the international agenda.

3.2. Tony Blair: 2001–2005

General election victory speech, June 2001

The 2001 victory speech at first glance seems no different from the 1997 speech. Same notions ('changes', 'future', 'family values', and the importance of 'children'), but 'changes', now used *six* times in his speech against only *one* occurrence in 1997, are now associated with *difficulties*: '**The changes** will not be easy', 'to overcome the challenge of **change**' (Blair, 2001).

He also said '*I have learned*' three times in the same paragraph so as to convince people that the first term of being Prime Minister had taught Blair something, and he and his government had made some improvements.

In this speech he primarily uses personal pronoun 'I', and not 'we'. This is allegedly to suggest that Blair is taking the blame for the mistakes of the first term. He sounds apologetic and yet hopeful.

Some themes from 1997 remained. For example, the concept of Britain as a unique nation with unique people: 'But **Britain is a very special country** and its **people are very special** people...' (Blair, 2001).

However, Blair now sounds like a globalist, the healthy nationalism is gone. He puts forward the idea of keeping up with the rest of the progressive world: 'In respect of Europe and the wider world, we need to make changes... so that we **are engaged, exerting influence**, having the self-belief **not to turn our back on the world** or retreat into isolation' (Blair, 2001).

Out of the blue arises the reform of the criminal system. Although there are no direct references to war and military actions, one cannot fail to notice a shift in the agenda.

On September 11 attacks, September 11, 2001

On September 11, 2001, two airplanes allegedly hijacked by terrorists crashed into the buildings of the World Trade Center, which caused heavy casualties. That was horrific, and NATO member states had to act in unison. Like many international leaders, Tony Blair gave a speech on that day, sending his condolences and expressing the feelings of his nation.

The speech is short and mostly talks of the security measures being taken. Blair emphasizes that the tragedy is of an international scale: '...It is plain that **citizens of many countries round the world including Britain** will have been caught up in this **terror**' (Blair, 2001).

Further on Blair puts out a statement pointing out that terrorism is a global problem: 'This is not a battle between the United States of America and terrorism but between the **free and democratic world** and **terrorism**' (Blair, 2001).

Blair presents democratic countries as a union: '<...> the **sanctity** or **value of human life** and we **the democracies of the world must come together**

to defeat it and eradicate it (Blair, 2001). Noteworthy, ‘democracies of the world’ are specified, as if it is a closed circle and no new members can be admitted.

Blair repeatedly uses the words ‘terrorism’ and ‘terror’, stressing how inhumane are the people involved: ‘As for those that carried out these attacks there are no *adequate* words of condemnation. Their *barbarism* will stand as their shame for all eternity’ (Blair, 2001).

The hopeful ‘new era’ and ‘new millennium’ are changed for the hopeless ‘new evil’: ‘As I said earlier, this mass *terrorism is the new evil in* our world’ (Blair, 2001).

*Speech at the Labour Party Convention,
October 1, 2002*

In 2002, Blair started to peddle the idea of joining the war in Iraq. The speech of 2002 had a negative background. A great many people were strongly against entering the war and Prime Minister wanted to persuade them that this was the right decision. At the Labour party convention, just as in 1999, Blair again used a smart manipulative strategy. He cajoled people into agreeing that they had so decided themselves: ‘If <...> having found the collective will to recognize the danger, we lose *our collective will* to deal with it, then *we* will destroy not the authority of America or Britain but of the United Nations itself’ (Blair, 2002).

Saying ‘we’, Blair evidently included the government, himself, and the people [Thompson, 2016]. This nuance helped to create the impression that the decision had already been made, and it was a collective one. And now there was no turning back.

Blair was constantly repeating that Britain was not alone, it was part of *‘the new world’* (the key image of his 1997 campaign): ‘For Britain to help shape *this new world*, Britain needs to be part of it’ (Blair, 2002).

It makes the audience think that Britain is staying current, it is tuned to the mainstream path, and it cannot betray its partners (‘<...> being in there, vigorous, confident, *leading in Europe not limping along several paces behind*’ (Blair, 2002)). This idea is well familiar from the victory speech of 2001. Slogans of this kind strongly affected the people.

In this speech Blair repeatedly makes references to **values**, **justice**, **democracy**, and **hope**, both in 2002 and 2003. These words admittedly served to help Blair produce the desired effect on the public, evoking sympathy and solidarity: ‘A coalition to fight terrorism and a coalition to give Africa *hope*’ (Blair, 2002).

This idea reappears in 2003: ‘The Iraqi people, whose *only hope* of liberation lies in the removal of Saddam’ (Blair, 2003).

These notions are used by Blair to show the contrast between the values of people who live in democratic countries and lack of values in rogue states: ‘*They* (terrorists, dictators) detest the *freedom, democracy* and *tolerance* that are the hallmarks of *our* way of life’ (Blair, 2003).

Speaking of the Iraqis, Blair creates a picture of helpless people. He claims that they ‘given the chance <...> *embrace*’ (Blair, 2002) Western values, which are ‘human values’. Sympathizing with the Iraqi people, he says that they have been ‘*groaning* under years of *dictatorship*’ (Blair, 2003). This image of the Iraqi people makes the British sympathize with them too, it is meant to reassure them that only war may save the innocent from dictatorship.

Blair’s words about the civilians help him persuade the audience that the military actions are inevitable. Scherbinina claims that people “seek out and pay attention to information and cues that confirm their beliefs, while ignoring or even discounting everything that doesn’t support what they hold true <...> In order to get past the automatic filters that your audience may have and make them open to the ideas that you are presenting, you need to start with what they believe” [Scherbinina, 2014, p. 57]. This is the same way as Blair manipulated the audience in 1999, while speaking of Kosovo. There is a reoccurrence of ‘dictator’ in a very similar context: “Sometimes, and in particular dealing with a *dictator*, the only chance of *peace is a readiness for war*’ (Blair, 2002).

In his 2003 speech, Blair uses ‘dictator’ or ‘dictatorship’ four times. Moreover, these uses occur at the end of the speech, meaning in a rhetorically strong position. Blair instills fear into the public, saying: ‘This is the time for this house, not just this government or, indeed, 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’ (Blair, 2003).

From his second term onwards, Tony Blair sticks to the 1999 manipulation strategy, meaning his Iraq-driven rhetoric. Blair elaborated the ‘*democratic countries*’ concept, uniting them into some kind of an indivisible power. The new concepts of Blair’s second term are ‘*dictator*’, ‘*evil*’, and ‘*the new evil*’.

3.3. Tony Blair: 2005–2007

In this chapter, we shall discuss General election victory speech, May 6, 2005; On London Explosions, July 7, 2005; Blair’s resignation speech, May 10, 2007. They mark the most significant events of the final stage of Blair’s premiership.

General election victory speech, May 6, 2005

The last, and the shortest term of Tony Blair as Prime Minister traditionally began with a victory speech. It is noticeably much less optimistic and far more apologetic than the previous two speeches. This speech significantly differs from the previous two in terms of themes. Some things overlap, others come in new.

In this speech we run across the familiar phrase '**I have learnt**' (used in 2001 victory speech) but strangely, it goes in a contracted form 'I've' and proceeds another action: '**I've listened and I've learnt** and I think I've a very clear idea of what the British people now expect from this government for a third term' (Blair, 2005).

'I've listened' shows that his decision of getting Britain involved in the Iraq military campaign was prompted by someone else. '**Future**' it is now used only two times. Same with '**change**'. Yet, the scope of work is broader, and intentions are more brazen: 'Making the **changes necessary** for the 21st century' (Blair, 2005).

'**The new era / millennium**' now becomes "the 21st century".

Blair continues to perfect his manipulative strategy. Besides "*I've listened and I've learnt*", he adds: 'When I stood here first, eight years ago, I was a lot **younger** but also a lot **less experienced**' (Blair, 2005). '...Even if we don't have quite the same expectations that people had of us in 1997, yet **now we do have**, I believe, the **experience** as well as the commitment to see it through' (Blair, 2005).

This is how he persuades people that, after all these years as Prime Minister, his government have gained enough competence and experience to continue their work as a leading power. Interestingly, the main arguments in favor of Tony Blair in 1997 were his youth and fresh approach.

What is more, Blair was aware that the people regarded the government with intense dislike after it had ignored their protests against the Iraq war and all he could say about the whole business was: 'I know that Iraq has been a **deeply divisive issue** in this country' (Blair, 2005). The theme, so pressing at that moment, was left attended; Blair swiftly passed on to other issues, including global warming and poverty in Africa, making himself scarce, as it were. He decided to pursue a strategy of evasion, revealing his incapability or reluctance to discuss the burning issue with the people. For the first time ever in his victory speech Blair had talked of military actions.

On London Explosions, July 7, 2005

A few months later, in 2005, Blair gave a short speech on the London Explosions of July 7. He spoke without notes. One could clearly see how firmly he stuck to all his favourite concepts and ideas.

Blair calls the victims of the terrorist attack **‘the innocent people’**. He once again compares terrorists with barbarians in the sense that they are not civilized: ‘It’s particularly *barbaric*’ (Blair, 2005). Civilized are the United Kingdom and its allied countries: ‘<...> they will never succeed in *destroying what we hold dear in this country and in other civilized nations throughout the world*’ (Blair, 2005).

Blair’s resignation speech, May 10, 2007

Blair made his last speech as leader of the country in 2007, when he stepped down as Prime Minister: ‘Blair’s resignation in 2007 was due to a Labour rebellion against his foreign policy of the previous seven years. The Afghanistan war in 2001, first, and the Iraq war in 2003 triggered his fall in politics and in public opinion’ [Muñoz, 2011, p. 84]. At some points the speech arouses sad and nostalgic feelings, at other points it sounds optimistic and patriotic. **‘This country is a blessed nation. The British are special. The world knows it.’** (Blair, 2007). ‘I came into office with high hopes for *Britain’s future*. I leave it with *even higher hopes for Britain’s future*’ (Blair, 2007).

Blair speaks of his 10 years’ worth of accomplishments. He got the country with sad feelings when he came to office, but his leadership had worked wonders and people had changed for the better, beyond recognition. ‘I looked at my own country. A great country. Wonderful history... But *strangely uncertain of its future*. Uncertain about the future. *Almost old-fashioned* <...> It was 20th century ideology in *a world approaching a new millennium*’ (Blair, 2007).

And the country had admittedly undergone some vital transformations: ‘People are today open-minded about race and sexuality, averse to prejudice and yet deeply and rightly conservative with a small ‘c’ when it comes to good manners, respect for others, treating people courteously’ (Blair, 2007).

Many people used to blame Blair for his decisions about Iraq. But he plays innocent. The involvement in the military campaign was Blair’s right thought. **‘Hand on heart, I did what I thought was right.** I may have been wrong. That’s your call. But believe one thing if nothing else. ***I did what I thought was right for our country***’ (Blair, 2007).

As is seen, syntactically, the speech has a few parallel constructions. The illocutionary force of a passage with such two parallel constructions is to make an argument complete, reinforce it. It is a consistent discursive pattern with Blair. It can be regarded as a perlocutionary act that serves to make the listener think that they have heard all the speaker wanted to say and they should not wait for any more explanations.

An example of this pattern is when Blair brings together thanks and apologies: '*I give my thanks to you*, the British people, for the times I have succeeded, and *my apologies* to you for the times I have fallen short' (Blair, 2007).

It must be stressed that Blair's rhetoric had been changing over the ten years of his premiership from the optimism about the new millennium in 1997 to the pessimism about a terrorist threat in 2001. Blair had been strongly pursuing manipulative strategies and never gave away any genuine regrets about his actions or desire to take his words back.

4. True/false markers and self-justification

As a public figure, the head of state is supposed to withhold some information or hide the truth. At some points it is done for the sake of stability and peace in the country, at other points it is done to satisfy some parochial interests, a lie then would entail dire consequences, especially when the country is involved in a military conflict. Among others are heavy casualties and a serious blow to the national reputation.

Picornell claims that lies in communication is not an individual act, but it is a 'complex of acts and devices, which should be considered to be a strategy and a chain of volitional acts, and they become an organic whole' [Picornell, 2012].

There is a phenomenon called 'organized political persuasion' which 'refers to a deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perceptions in order to gain support for a policy. This goes beyond simply trying to inform the audience, as the aim is to get it to adopt a particular perspective about the information being presented' [Herring, Robinson, 2014: 217]. There are several ways to persuade deceptively, for instance, by lying explicitly, or by withholding information.

In this chapter, we shall look at Blair's 2003 and 2016 speeches so as to demonstrate the findings of deception studies.

The Opening Speech at the House of Commons Debate on the Iraq Crisis, March 18, 2003

According to Pennebaker's studies of deception, one of the inherent features of an untruthful statement or speech is a **low frequency in the use of first-person singular**, or, in other words, a **low use of self-references**. The lack of self-references helps liars distance themselves from the situation they are lying about [Newman et al., 2003].

In his 2003 speech, Blair uses 'I' only 19 times, while using 'we' 134 times. He also uses 'they' (23) and 'them' (14). The use of 'we' enables Blair to fill the emptiness, which appears due to the lack of 'I'. Additionally,

it creates the impression that there is an agreement between the people and the government, he unites them with the help of 'we'. Interestingly, there is almost zero use of 'I' in the main parts of both speeches.

Another sign of an untruthful speech, according to Belyanin and Larin, is the use of indefinite pronouns and adjectives with an indefinite meaning [Belyanin, Larin, 2017]. The total number of them in the 2003 speech is 36, 17 of which is the use of 'any', and 12 of 'some'. See the contexts below:

a) 'I know that there are *some* countries or groups within countries that are proliferating and trading in WMD, especially nuclear weapons technology' (Blair, 2003);

b) 'But the inspectors indicated there was at least *some* cooperation; and the world rightly hesitated over war' (Blair, 2003);

c) 'But, of course, in a sense, *any* fair observer does not really dispute that Iraq is in breach and that 1441 implies action in such circumstances' (Blair, 2003).

The sentences sound obscure as they lack detailed information. This has long been an efficient manipulative tool in political discourse [Muhortov, Krasnova, 2016].

Belyanin and Larin introduce the **strategy of verbosity** as a concealment strategy [Belyanin, Larin, 2017]. Indeed, it is hard to be laconic for a politician, and the abundant use of words is not always a sign of falsehood, but taking into account the previous paragraph, we can confirm that the use of compound sentences without real details and concrete information are likely to hide a lie. This is Blair's strategy in 2003: 'I know *there are several countries* – mostly dictatorships with highly repressive regimes – desperately trying to acquire chemical weapons, biological weapons or, in particular, nuclear weapons capability. *Some of* these countries are now a short time away from having a serviceable nuclear weapon' (Blair, 2003). A lack of details, particularly names, cannot be disregarded.

Another criterion of a statement or a speech being untruthful is the appeal to the **social context**. This device helps a liar share the responsibility with others [Myslickaya, Larin, 2017]. The lack of frequent self-references, frequent uses of 'we' is, presumably, part of it, as 'we' helps Blair share the responsibility with someone else ('*We must face the consequences of the actions we advocate*' (Blair, 2003)).

Below are more examples to this:

a) 'This is the time for this house, not just this government or indeed 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 <...>' (Blair, 2003);

b) 'Not all of Europe – *Spain, Italy, Holland, Denmark, Portugal* – *have all 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 our support' (Blair, 2003).

Blair constantly appeals to the threat of nuclear weapons and terrorist attacks. This is an *emotional* type of manipulation, which presupposes 'eliciting an emotion with the aim of making use of it. Typical emotions used to manipulate are fear, sympathy, a sense of gratitude towards the manipulator, and feelings of guilt if the target does not agree on what the manipulator wants' [Abdulmajeed, Finjan, 2017]. Now that special agencies have confirmed that there was no nuclear weapon in Iraq, Blair's manipulations become apparent.

All in all, it should be acknowledged that Blair lied at the time he decided to join the US and enter the Iraq war in 2003. Moreover, it made his speech successful. In the beginning the atmosphere in the room was gloomy and tense, but everything changed when he finished. 'When Blair finished his speech', according to Jones (2003) in *The Guardian*, 'many Tory MPs and Labour backbenchers, waved their order papers in admiration and support.' Jones (2003) also said Blair concluded his speech with 'an emotional, hand-written peroration appealing for backing for military action' [Hamilton, 2012].

Tony Blair's Statement on the Chilcot Iraq Report, July 6, 2016

In this speech, Blair actively exploits *self-justification*. According to Myslitskaya and Larin, people, who are not sure if their negative experience is going to be revealed, prefer to tell about it themselves, leaving out the most negative points and concentrating instead on something less "significant". This gives them the opportunity to make these events less negative [Myslitskaya, Larin, 2017]. All these actions are expressed through self-justification tactics.

The Iraq Inquiry, a British public inquiry into the nation's role in the Iraq War, published in 2016 with a public statement by Chilcot, left Blair no choice but admit his guilt. Blair pursues self-justification tactics throughout the speech and there are several false markers here, same as in the 2003 speech.

Firstly, there is the appeal to *social context*:

a) 'My premiership changed completely on 11th September 2001. 9/11 was the worst terrorist atrocity in history. Over 3000 people died that day in America, including many British people, making it the worst ever loss of life of our own country's citizens from any single terror attack' (Blair, 2016);

b) 'What is clear is that this extremism is a global problem not confined to the well-known theatres of the Middle East, Pakistan or Afghanistan but

across Africa – including Nigeria, Chad, Niger, Mali, and Somalia – and Asia including the Philippines Thailand and Bangladesh. It is in Central Asia and of course, we have had terrorist attacks in Europe, and the USA’ (Blair 2016).

These examples show that Blair appeals to the history of the problem, to the past (9/11 attack) and present-day situation. In both fragments, he focuses on the social context, distancing himself from the situation, and simultaneously distracting the audience from the main point of the inquiry. Both examples are an illustration of how Blair pursues *the strategy of verbosity*, or to put it in the vernacular, he is being wordy. He mentions dates, historical facts, countries, but there is no actual information concerning the topic of discussion.

Another self-justification tactic is the appeal to *unawareness*. This helps the speaker lower the subjective significance of negative information, and distance himself from this negative information [Myslickaya, Larin, 2017]:

a) ‘*We did not know* how such a nexus between such weapons and terrorist groups might arise. It *could be* deliberate because a rogue regime, for whatever reason, saw an advantage in their use by terrorists and gave them the weapons or the capability of making them, possibly on a deniable basis. Or it *could be* that in the chaos or instability such regimes engendered, they could fall into the wrong hands’ (Blair, 2016);

b) ‘Above all, the ISG find that he intended to go back to a nuclear programme, fearing the Iranian development of nuclear weapons, and that he kept his teams and capability to develop those, and chemical weapons once sanctions were removed. *Now of course we don’t know he would have done this*, but I ask: *If you knew that* <...>’ (Blair, 2016).

The phrase “we/I don’t/didn’t know” is recurrent in this speech. Blair insists that the situation in 2001–2003 was unstable, that there were no solid facts to rely on, and *they* (America and Great Britain) *had to* act due to the threat.

One more self-justification tactic used by Blair is the appeal to *indirect involvement*. It helps him show that he is not the direct negative experience holder; he is only marginally related to this negative event or experience:

a) ‘The fear of the US Administration, *which I shared*, was of the possibility of terrorist groups acquiring, either by accident or design, chemical weapons, biological weapons or even a primitive nuclear device’ (Blair, 2016);

b) ‘I was absolutely clear publicly and privately that we *would be with the USA in dealing with this issue*, as I made clear in the note to President Bush of July 28, 2002, but we had to proceed in the right way and I set out the conditions necessary especially that we should *go down the UN path* and avoid precipitate action as the report finds’ (Blair, 2016);

c) 'However, by then, there was substantial disagreement in the Security Council. *America wanted action*. President Putin and the leadership of France did not' (Blair, 2016);

d) 'But the *USA* understandably *insisted* that in the event of continued failure, the UN had to be clear that action would follow' (Blair, 2016).

Blair insists on America's leading role in this campaign. It sounds like Blair just had to follow the lead, which partially mitigates his guilt.

It is accurate to note that there are 72 uses of 'I', 67 uses of 'we', and 44 uses of 'they/them' in the speech. The number of 'I' forms is high; however, 'we' and 'they' outweigh. Who else rather than head of state should plead guilty? Who else rather than Blair should always be repeating 'I'? As was stated above, a low frequency in the use of first-person singular can indicate lies, but Blair had to say 'I', as the Chilcot Iraq Report aimed him. Yet, the use of other pronouns is a way higher.

Additionally, there is a high frequency of indefinite pronouns 'some' and 'any', 6 and 12, respectively.

The examples below show that Blair's statements lack detailed information, there is no precision and accuracy in his accounts. It seems as if he deliberately avoided putting into words the accusations of the inquiry in the last fragment.

a) 'The Inquiry finds that there were some warnings about sectarian fighting and bloodletting. I accept that but would point out that nowhere were these highlighted as the main risk and in *any event* what we faced was not the anticipated internal bloodletting but an all-out insurgency stimulated by external arms and money' (Blair, 2016);

b) 'Today this report puts *some allegations* which have poisoned the well of debate on this issue – those of bad faith, of lying or deceit or deliberate misrepresentation – to rest' (Blair, 2016).

Special mention should be made of yet another false marker, the use of 'after' and 'then', which, respectively, accounts for 13 and 18. These words are believed to be used to fill in 'lacunas' in the speech, as they help a liar skip some facts and use them instead of going into detail [Belyanin, Larin, 2017].

By way of conclusion, it must be said that profiling politicians has increasingly become popular over recent decades. With the advance of technology, it has become a way easier to get access to data (transcripts of speeches, debates, interviews, etc.) and content-analysis tools. Researching the politician's phrasing may clarify why he or she was acting in a particular way at a certain period; things can often become clearer with hindsight. We have been able to trace the changing nature, and rhetoric, of Tony Blair as Prime Minister and former Prime Minister. Over the ten years of his premiership it fluctuated wildly from optimism about the forthcoming

millennium in 1997 to pessimism about terrorist threats in 2001. Deliberately or unintentionally, Blair pursued manipulative strategies and showed no genuine remorse for his actions or words. The exception was in 2016, when due to the accusations of the Chilcot Iraq Report Blair had to use self-justification. From 2001 onwards, Blair's oral and written discourses as former Prime Minister became more defensive and expressive. False markers in Blair's speeches in 2003 and 2016 show that, strategically, Blair sought to evade responsibility. In the 2016 speech he had to use self-references, which is untypical for 'deceitful' discourse, but he used it due to the allegations.

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Сведения об авторах

Мухортов Денис Сергеевич – кандидат филологических наук, доцент; доцент кафедры английского языка № 6 факультета управления и политики, Московский государственный институт международных отношений (университет) Министерства иностранных дел Российской Федерации; доцент кафедры английского языкознания филологического факультета, Московский государственный университет имени М.В. Ломоносова

Denis S. Mukhortov – Ph.D. in Philology; associate professor at the English Department 6 of the School of Governance and Politics, Moscow State Institute of International Relations (University) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation; Associate Professor at the Department of English Linguistics of the Faculty of Philology, Lomonosov Moscow State University

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8174-7055>

E-mail: dennismoukhortov@mail.ru

Дымент Анна Романовна – магистрант филологического факультета, Московский государственный университет имени М.В. Ломоносова

Anna R. Dymant – MA in Philology, at the English Linguistics of the Faculty of Philology, Lomonosov Moscow State University

E-mail: anya1817@gmail.com