Ideology in Representation of Syrian Conflict

Bouchaib Benzehaf
Chouaib Doukkali University, El Jadida, Morocco

Abstract: The following paper is a critical discourse analysis of an article that figured in the electronic version of the Washington Post with the title: "A red line Assad must not cross: chemical weapons". Using a combination of Van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach and Halliday’s systemic functional grammar, the paper attempts to expose power relations holding in international relations as well as ideology that is a feature of political discourse. The findings testify to the existence of an ideologically laden political discourse that distorts the reality in such a way as to serve the interests of the group whose point of view is passed as common sense. This distortion takes place through the vehicle of polarization which dichotomizes the world into a positive self-representation and a negative other-representation with the purpose of effecting American leadership over the world and asserting the US as hegemon. The study contributes to the understanding of the ideological role of language within political discourse in constructing Orientalist representations of the East in such a way as to make American leadership a requirement.

Key Words: Critical Discourse Analysis, Ideology, Macro-proposition, Lexical Choice, neo-conservative, Orientalist, Modality, Legitimation, Mental Models.

1. Introduction

The following paper offers an analysis of a political speech drawn from the electronic version of the Washington Post. The text is entitled: “Syria’s Assad must not be allowed to use chemical weapons”, and it was chosen from a corpus of texts dating about 3 years ago. The text serves to show that there is no big change in American politics towards Syria since the conflict started. The analysis derives its importance from the fact that it allows us to see if and how political discourse paints a subjective and ideologically biased picture of reality. To this end, I utilize analytic tools from Van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach as well as from Halliday’s systemic functional grammar with the purpose of highlighting the Western ideology that is at work in the text. I also examine the way the writer argues for a US military intervention. The paper sets out to verify the validity of the following hypothesis: With respect to the Syrian conflict, the underlying ideology of the discourse is the American supremacy which dichotomizes the West and East into a positive “US” and a negative “THEY”.

The paper starts with a short theoretical part in which I offer definitions of concepts utilized in the analysis. More precisely, Van Dijk’s concepts of global meanings, local meanings and mental models are defined. Equally defined is the concept of modality as utilized in Halliday’s systemic functional grammar. Argumentation is yet another concept to be defined. These concepts are employed in the practical part of this paper. The text is analyzed in terms of macro-propositions, lexical choice, argumentation, modality, and mental models. The results of the study will hopefully demonstrate that, particularly in political discourse, critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA) provides a great opportunity to discover the realities which according to Fairclough (1995) have been distorted and naturalized as “non-ideological common sense” (p.27).

2. Theoretical framework

According to Van Dijk (1998), CDA is concerned with studying and analyzing discourse. A basic assumption of CDA is that speakers of any language make choices as far as vocabulary and grammar are concerned. Consciously or unconsciously, these choices are "principled and systematic" (Fowler et al., 1979, p. 188). They are ideologically based. According to Fowler et al. (1979), the "relation between form and content is not arbitrary or conventional, but . . . form signifies content" (p. 188). CDA reveals the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality and bias. It investigates how these discursive sources come about, are maintained and reproduced within specific social, political and historical contexts. It exposes power abuse with a view to empowering the powerless, raising the voice of the voiceless, redressing the balance where it has been unjustly tipped. It calls for interventionism in the social practices it critically explores. Toolan (1997) for instance makes this point clear when he calls for a prescriptive stance: CDA should offer proposals for change as well as corrections to particular discourses. Hence, it is strongly committed to change and empowerment.

CDA practitioners work within different frameworks. One theoretical framework is Van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach. Van Dijk (1995) essentially perceives discourse analysis as ideology analysis. To Van Dijk (1994), it is the socio-cognition that mediates between society and discourse. Social cognition for him is the system of mental representations and
processes of group members. In this sense, Van Dijk (1994) argues that “ideologies … are the overall, abstract mental systems that organize … socially shared attitudes” (p.18). In this way, ideologies "indirectly influence the personal cognition of group members" (p. 18).

In Van Dijk (2001), topics play a major role in the analysis. They are defined as macro-structures and they capture the most important information in the discourse. They are the “global meanings” that language users constitute in the production and comprehension of discourse. As discourse recipients cannot remember everything, topics lend themselves readily to memory. Equally recalled by recipients are local meanings or lexical choices opted for in discourse. Local meanings are important because they influence recipients’ mental models and hence their opinions and attitudes. Through both global meanings and local meanings, discourses portray “a positive self-presentation and a negative other-presentation” (Van Dijk, 2001).

"Models" are another key concept in Van Dijk and they stand for the mental representations of individuals during social actions and interactions. For Van Dijk (2001), "models control how people act, speak or write, or how they understand the social practices of others" (p. 22). These mental representations according to him "are often articulated along ‘US’ versus ‘THEM’ dimensions, in which speakers of one group will generally tend to present themselves or their own group in positive terms, and other groups in negative terms" (p. 22).

In Van Dijk (2001), mental models are of two types: context models and event models. Context models are mental representations that control the properties of discourse production and understanding. They are the link between mental information and actual meanings under construction. They are divided into global and local contexts. “Global contexts are defined by the social, political, cultural and historical structures in which a communicative event takes place” while local contexts are “defined in terms of the properties of the immediate interactional situation in which a communicative event takes place” (Van Dijk, 2001:108). Not only do language users form mental models about the situation in which they operate but also about the event which they happen to be talking about (Van Dijk, 2001). Event models can be claimed to control the semantic part of discourse.

Another theoretical framework which CDA practitioners usually have recourse to is the Systemic–Functional Grammar of Halliday (1985, 1994). This is a lexico–grammatical theory according to which language is not a self-contained system, independent of the context in which it is used. For Halliday (1985), language is a network of options from which we make selections that are ideologically significant. Thus, meaning is the result of the choices made, or not made, by text producers. Additionally, language is construed as being multifunctional, performing simultaneously “ideational”, “interpersonal” and “textual” meta-functions (Halliday, 1994).

A significant part of the interpersonal function is modality. Modality is a semantic system expressing the speaker’s judgment or evaluation covering the field between a categorical assertion and a categorical negation of a proposition, hence adding a qualifying element to the semantic value of the proposition. In his book An Introduction to Functional Grammar, (Halliday, 1985, 1994), Halliday combines modality and polarity. He defines all the possibilities and states lying between the positive pole (“yes”) and the negative pole (“no”) as modality. All these states dependent on each other constitute a continuum.

Modality is expressed by modal auxiliary verbs as well as by various other formal features including adverbs and tense. Four types of modality are listed in Simpson (Simpson, 1993): deontic, boulomaic, epistemic and perception. These modals and their functions can be schematized as follows:

![Modal system](image)

**Figure 1: modals and functions (Simpson, 1993)**
Another concept utilized in the analysis is argument. According to Douglas Walton, an argument is made up of premises and a conclusion that are propositions. The proposition has two defining characteristics. First, it is something that is, in principle, true or false. Second, it is typically contained in a special kind of speech act. It is contained in a sentence that makes an assertion.

In my analysis, I opted for van Dijk’s approach, aware though I am of some of its limitations. These limitations bear on cognition. First, we cannot have access to cognition in the absence of ethnographic findings. However, I believe that apart from this limitation, the approach can yield important insights into the ideology of the text. Macro-propositions and micro-propositions, for instance, can capture the essence of what the text orients towards. Therefore, I make use of Van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach and I blend it with systemic functional grammar. From the latter, I take mainly modality which is a choice that qualifies language. It gives insight into how strong the argumentation of the text is.

3. Analysis

3.1. Semantic macro-structures

a. Al Assad is compared to Iraq’s past ruler Saddam Hussein who is designated as dictator.
b. Al Assad’s regime is allowed to cross red lines committing murderous acts.
c. Swift and devastating military force will be the response to Assad’s use of chemical weapons.
d. The need for renewed efforts to create a more stable Syria.
e. US absence has left a void that came to be filled in by ‘others’.
f. Practical presence in Syria is a must for the US to have a role there.
g. The need for the US to move beyond conventional forces.
h. Use of chemical weapons is a red line that the US must enforce.

The first macro-proposition in the text passes negative information about the Syrian regime by comparing it to the ex-Iraqi regime. To accentuate the horrors of the Syrian president, the text calls into mind the horrible acts committed by Saddam Hussein who is designated as a dictator, horrors that Al-Assad is also likely to inflict on his people as the text suggests. This comparison has the effect of driving forward the idea that Bashar Al-Assad is to the Syrians what Saddam Hussein was to the Iraqis. From this appeal to history, a mapping is suggested that draws a relational similarity between two situations not very remote in time and history: the Iraqi situation and the Syrian situation. The ultimate aim behind drawing this similarity between the two regimes is to accentuate the de-legitimation of the Syrian president and thus pave the ground for military intervention. It is an Orientalist picture that captures the Syrian people as a powerless, naïve and pitiable creature that is in need of the US. The latter is portrayed as the benevolent hegemon whose existence is a must.

The other topics, which are elaborations on this topic, are an expression of a neo-conservative ideology that aims at asserting American supremacy through the use of force. It is also an ideology that dichotomizes the world into a positive and active “US” versus a negative and passive “THEY”. It is to the latter category that the East, represented by the Syrian people, belongs. The East is powerless and in need of the West; otherwise, it will be devoured by bad regimes like the Iraqi regime before and the Syrian regime now. The East cannot remedy its ills in the absence of the US. Only the presence of the USA will effect positive change. If the US is not present, there is a void and it is being filled in by terrorist “others”. The unsaid of the Iraqi story is the fact that the USA fabricated a lie to go to Iraq: that Saddam possesses mass destruction weapons. It is also the fact that the American soldiers killed, tortured and raped thousands of Iraqis. Further, Iraq is not yet that stable country. Of course, these upheavals are also the result of US interventions.

Overall, the macro-propositions suggest that there is a gap in the area and that only the US is capable of filling that gap. This betrays a need for the US to be present on the scene in the form of leadership: ‘practical presence is a must to have a role in the area’. The text lists what the US must do to put into practice that leadership: implement a safe zone, train opposition,… Above all, the US must enforce the red line. All through, there is a dichotomization between a protective West and a powerless East waiting for Western protection and leadership.

3.2. Lexical choices

The first choice worth reflecting on is “we”. The text starts from personal beliefs which are defined in terms
of a macro-proposition demonstrated by the use of the collective pronoun “we”. Such a use instantiate shared political beliefs, viz., those of all American people, in general. “We” is a typical political pronoun that shows the group implied in the text. The “we” is inclusive of one group which is the West, exclusive of another group which is the East. The choice of “we” is also the practice of group categorization that is so ideological. It represents the in-group members, the USA and its allies. At the same time, it depicts the negative representation of the out-group members, the East. The East cannot do the planning and cannot find a solution to the Syrian crisis. Thus, the East is negatively stereotyped to justify the act of speaking on its behalf as well as to legitimate American leadership over it. The discursive polarization of “we” and “they”, which is typical of political discourse, not only reflects mental representations of people talked about (the West vs. the East), but also the categories of participants represented in context models as “we” Americans/leaders vs. “they” the East, the Arabs. The latter (the East) cannot take the decision, cannot implement it, and it is from the East where extremists and terrorists spring (Jabhat al-Nusra as an example). Present in the first category (Americans) is the power to plan and lead the world which is absent in the other category as the East is represented to be waiting for American leadership.

“Al-Qaeda” is another lexical choice opted for. It triggers off the horrors inflicted on Americans on 9/11. Its use in the text functions in such a way as to justify military intervention. It aims at garnering mass consent. Any American would want a strong reaction on the part of the USA upon hearing Al-Qaeda. The text talks about “positive” change as that change which is effected by the USA. Implicitly any change not implemented by the USA is not positive. A polarization is suggested here between a passive East that cannot effect a positive change and an active West capable of bringing about positive change. This polarization is a discursive strategy that the text utilizes for the purpose of highlighting positive self-representation and negative other-representation. It betrays the American ideology of leadership in the world through spreading American values an example of which is the positive change the text talks about. This is made clear when the text speaks about opportunities to shape the world which is the Syrian opposition and the direction of the conflict. “Shaping” the outcome in such a way as to serve the American interests and American hegemonic aspirations is clearly the target here and it is presented as the wished-for change. Shaping is also a function of the text to interfere in the conflict. This greatness reflects the neo-conservative ideology associated with Republicans according to which the US must police the world. The word “leadership” which figures three times betrays this ideology. American leadership is measured in the text by military involvement in Syria, by owning Syria’s problem because America is designated as leader of the world.

3.3. Argumentation for intervention

To justify the desired US intervention that aims at effecting US supremacy, the text argues mainly by consequences. However, a number of techniques are used to reason the consequences. The arguments are presented against the backdrop of the horrors committed by Saddam. A tyrant like Assad invites comparison with the other ‘demon’ of US foreign policy: Saddam Hussein: “As we remember that horror and reflect on the lives ended by a tyrant” is a premise of an argument, the other premise being a “similar atrocity in Syria” is to be witnessed if action is not taken. Normally the whole argument would suggest itself as follows:

Saddam is a tyrant
Saddam killed his people
Assad is a tyrant
Assad will kill his people
Therefore, US interference is a must.

As such, military intervention is justified. As a leader, the US should prevent Assad from killing his people through military action. To drive people to make the conclusion that military interference is recommended, the text cites allegedly foreseeable consequences of Assad’s action (we may see images of dying mothers). The nominalizations “horror” and “atrocity” function in a way to construe a particular vision of harsh future reality that requires imminent action.

Tracing back to history is also to be interpreted as argument from analogy. The Syrian situation is compared to the Iraqi situation under Saddam’s rule with a view to giving plausibility to the interference. Drawing a similarity between the two situations, the text concludes: “Once again, we may see images of dying mothers vainly shielding their infants from the chemical storm” implying like we saw in Iraq which makes interference a must. This argument also polarizes the world into “WE” versus “THEY”. Syrians, part of the “THEY”, are depicted as powerless and in need of the hegemon “WE”.

The function of tracing back to history in the argument, an instance of what Fairclough calls inter-textuality (see Fairclough, 1992a), is to rationalize the argument. Making recourse to factual knowledge is by way of giving the “threat” a factual state while also raising an emotion of fear in recipients from what may
ensue if the US does not intervene. “We must realize” that comes later in the text marks the urgency of the situation and therefore the rigid necessity of a US intervention to grant a threat-free future to the Syrian people. “We must realize” is a strategy of rationalizing the military action, constituting the common sense. All along, the Syrians are like a small child who needs a mature person to protect it. The mature person is of course the “WE” of the US.

Conditional proposition is another technique utilized in argumentation: “If the United States receives credible intelligence that the Assad regime is using — or preparing to use — chemical weapons against the Syrian people, we will respond with swift and devastating military force”. This is a proposition that has an antecedent and a consequence. The antecedent (‘if’ part of the proposition) is not necessarily asserted as true but merely a hypothesis. But hypothetical though it is, the whole conditional proposition is assumed to be true. Even if it is not true that the US is receiving credible intelligence that the Assad regime is using chemical weapons, it could still be true that if the Assad regime is using chemical weapons, then the US should respond with swift and devastating military force. The consequence of responding with swift and devastating military force is underscored, which reflects the wish to assert supremacy through force.

Additionally, the text appeals to emotions. A phrase like “images of dying mothers vainly shielding their infants from the chemical storm” is by way of raising emotions and ensuring sympathy with the mothers’ conditions and therefore in line with what we may call a protective American ideology that Syrians are shown to be in need of. What awaits Syrians from Al-Assad can be halted only by the so-called protective American ideology, an ideology the terms of which are spelt out in the paragraph before the last in the form of what should be done (all procedures relate to military action).

Certainly the motive is not humanitarian concerns as the text is implying but the interests of the USA betrayed by phrases like “presence there” and “opportunities to shape both the nature of the Syrian opposition and the direction of this conflict”. The wished-for “presence” betrays also a fear from a competition with another side that seems to be already present. A competition between two ideologies for the control of Syria is conspicuous: the American ideology and the Iranian ideology. The latter ideology is represented by Hezbollah, Jabhat al-Nusra and Iran itself, key players that are mentioned in the text. These players represent the other extreme of the East. While the first extreme (the Syrian people) is represented as a pitable creature that needs protection, the other extreme is these “players” and the Syrian regime who are like wild animals poised to attack the child-like Syrians: an Orientalist picture that “barbarizes” half the East while rendering the other half naive.

The sentence “the world has waited for the leadership necessary to halt Assad’s murderous acts” testifies to this. The Syrians need US leadership. The US is depicted as a caring mother that must intervene in between a barbaric tyrant/dictator and a child-like innocent naive people. The statement seems factual, but in fact is only an opinion. The text markets the view that the USA should carry out a military intervention. After an analysis of what the situation is on the ground (crossing red lines that are not specified, and a vacuum being filled by terrorists) in the absence of the USA, it is concluded what should be done: a military intervention, which semantically is also an opinion, but pragmatically an act of strong advice or recommendation, a must to protect Assad’s people from Assad.

Likewise, the text employs hyperbole to exaggerate the consequences. It does not give a precise number of casualties in Iraq. It speaks instead of “thousands” and when it comes to the Syrian situation the number is accentuated to “tens of thousands”. Speaking in generalities instead of giving exact numbers has the effect of magnifying the toll. The number is exaggerated to manipulate mental models of recipients in such a way as to make them accept American intervention as natural and as a necessity, as the right thing to do. It is an instance of hyperbole used as a strategy of argumentation. The aim is to enhance the need for intervention.

Another example of hyperbole is “red lines”. A red line is drawn for Assad in the title, but then we learn that Assad has been crossing red line after red line. How many red lines crossed so far is not stated. It is an instance of hyperbole exaggerating the number of red lines which are crossed by Assad. However, the concept of “red line” in the text is also vague and fluid, with no borderline as to what is and what is not “red line”. The text does not specify exactly what red lines Assad has crossed leaving them ambiguous.

Finally, we can speak of another sort of argument that is implied. It is argument from commitment. If the US is committed to be leader of the world, then it has to intervene in the conflict. This commitment springs mainly from the neo-conservative ideology that stipulates that the US must assume leadership and therefore must own the world’s problems and solve them. It is a commitment to policing the world with a view to protecting hegemonic aspirations. Therefore, the American image is in question particularly after the latest attacks on Boston. Issues of nationalism and security motivate the will to intervene.

All in all, the text argues by consequences but different techniques are used to accentuate these consequences: analogy, conditional proposition, emotional appealing, and rationality. However, consequences are also expressed through modals. An example is “we may see images of dying mothers”. It is to modality that we now turn.
3.4. Modality

Scrutinizing the article we come up with the following chart:

Tableau 1: Modals and frequencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modal</th>
<th>Must</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Should</th>
<th>Can</th>
<th>Will</th>
<th>Likely</th>
<th>Hope</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Times</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Basing our reading on the statistics, it is easy to see the prevalence of MUST which occurs nine times. This modal falls under the category of deontic modality which denotes obligation. It represents the modal system of duty, being concerned with the attitude towards the degree of obligation attaching to the act of intervention. It denotes requirement offering as it does what is required of the USA vis-a-vis the Syrian conflict. MUST signals strong commitment and requirement and it is used with the pronoun “WE” to implicate the recipients in the vision and to convince them of the urgency to intervene. It is a personal feeling that, what the “we” group MUST do, is extremely necessary and is the rational thing. The aim is to persuade the recipients of the urgency of the issue and then to seek the approval, support and cooperation in what action to succeed; namely, the US must be present on the scene. SHOULD (used twice) also reveals the intention of using MUST. SHOULD expresses advice that the text delivers to the recipients and particularly to the American politicians and president. Both modals belong to the deontic function of modality offering a range of different degrees of duty ranging from obligation (SHOULD) to requirement (MUST). Both have a direct relevance to tactics of persuasion.

Closely related to the deontic modality is the boulomaic modality, which is “extensively grammaticized in English in expressions of ‘desire’” (Simpson, 1993, p.57). This type of modality indicates wishes and desires. It is represented in the text with the verb “hope” in “We must be willing to put force behind our diplomatic efforts if we hope to encourage any sort of positive outcome”. The text moves from a requirement (we must be willing to put force) to a wish for a positive outcome which is apparently what serves the interests of the “we” group.

Other modals that figure in the text are MAY (3 times) and CAN (twice). The adverb “likely” can also be grouped with these modals as it carries the same meaning. All three fall within the epistemic system. Epistemic modality is concerned with the speaker’s confidence or lack of it in the truth of a proposition. As can be seen, these modals reflect eventualities:

- Weapons that is now more likely to fall into the wrong hands.
- There is no strong confidence that these actions are going to happen. They are just probabilities as the modal MAY denotes probability. Thus, they constitute eventualities, events that might happen.

Another modal figuring in the text that we still have to reckon with is “will”. Though it appears only once, it has a significance showing what will ensue from Assad’s use of chemical weapons. The event of WILL is considered to come as a matter of fact. “We will respond with swift and devastating military force” is a serious threat issued to Assad if Assad uses chemical weapons. It does not only have a very high probability of occurrence but it is given the status of fact if we consider WILL a future tense and not a modal.

We cannot finish this section on modality without talking about tense in the text, for it is another important feature of modality. The dominant tense is the present tense. This tense expresses the proposition in its raw form, not qualified, and thus it is one terminal point of modality. The present simple tense in the text is a categorical assertion even stronger than the use of “must” (see Lyons 1977), for while modalized propositions express a commitment that ranges between strong and weak, unmodalized ones like the present simple tense express assertions that are categorical. The present simple tense presents information particularly opinions as transparent and factual disguising the text’s ideology. Therefore, the threat posed in the text is assigned factual aspect through the present simple tense.

3.5. Context models

The context defining the communicative event in the text is that of politics, while the overall actions are those of effecting American supremacy in the region through military interference in Syria. The local setting of the communicative event is the Internet. The communicative role of the participant is that of writer, the interactional role that of a defender of US leadership and supremacy over the world. The other participant, the addressee, is implied in the pronoun “we”, thus trying to emphasize the unity of the in-group the interests of whom the text seems to be
defending. However, the text’s final wished-for destinataries are obviously the American president and the parliament whom the writer wishes to convince of an intervention. But since the text is on the Internet, the Internet community as a whole is addressed.

The current communicative action is that of publishing an opinion in the newspaper to convince the recipients of an intervention. This action is performed through the speech act of persuading. The persuasive structure of the text through the use of ‘must’ for example pre-supposes that not all Americans have the same opinion about the conflict in Syria. The text is meaningful to its readers because it pre-supposes some common ground knowledge like the Iraqi conflict.

Throughout, the text has an argumentative structure organized in such a way as to reinforce its persuasive communicative function. The polarization that the text creates between East and West expresses an Orientalist perspective. Lexical choice is apt for the genre of political speech. The text pre-supposes existent general knowledge about US interference in Iraq to assert US supremacy but it does not pre-suppose knowledge that debilitates the case it is arguing for; namely, that thousands of Iraqis died because of American bombardment and that Iraq is still unstable up to now as a result of that intervention.

Semantically also, the text offers its arguments in an ideologically biased way. What is relevantly expressed are from an ideologically neo-conservative perspective that aims at effecting American supremacy and leadership through military intervention. The arguments are expressed in such a way as to influence the mental models of the recipients. Hence, one aspect of persuasion can be defined as discursive manipulation of mental models.

4. Conclusion

In the context of American-dominated international politics, the text appears to project a specific point of view which is the American according to which military intervention in Syria is the right measure to avert a humanitarian catastrophe. The picture that emerges from the newspaper coverage of Syria is biased. It reinforces the dichotomy of “US” versus “THEM” with hegemonic undertones. It is biased also because it argues on behalf of the revolutionists and the Syrian people without giving them a voice. The picture therefore is an Orientalist picture that casts Oriental societies in an unfavorable light and offers the US as the part that is qualified to do the planning on their behalf and the part that holds the solution to their ills. It is also an example that testifies that politics is the realm for assertion of power to put into practice certain political ideas and political action (Bayram, 2010).

The text also has undertones of a competition with Iran over the area. The US feels its supremacy there is at stake and so it offers an argument in terms of what may happen should Assad be allowed to go on killing his people. This argument is pitted against the Iraqi situation drawing a relational similarity with a view to laying the ground for an intervention. We know that the US’s concern is not humanitarian issues. Far from it, it is the leadership, a word which figures more than once in the text (3 times) and that betrays the real motivation of the USA. The discursive strategies utilized in the text serve to orient readers to a specific interpretive framework: that the USA is leader of the world. All in all, the analysis of the text confirms the hypothesis we started with: With respect to the Syrian conflict, the underlying ideology of the discourse is neo-conservative which aims at asserting the American supremacy through the discursive strategy of dichotomizing the West and East into a positive “US” and a negative “THEY”. It aims to come at the conclusion that the “US” must rule the “THEY” because it is qualified for that role while the “THEY” are fit only to be ruled and have things decided on their behalf.

5. References


6. Appendix

The text can be accessed on the following link: http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/syrias-assad-must-not-be-allowed-to-use-chemical-weapons/2013/03/15/93e74006-8cf0-11e2-b63f-f53fb9f2fcb4_story.html